

# 1 John

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1 John 5:14-17

Vss. 14-15

- In vs. 13, John emphasized that by believing in the Son of God we can *KNOW* that we have eternal life. Here John continues with the theme that through our relationship we have with Jesus we can live day to day with absolute confidence as we live out our faith in this world.
- But John wants us to be clear that this confidence does not rest in ourselves, but in God. On my own I can do nothing, but through Christ I can accomplish all things. HE makes all the difference.
- So as we pray, and we pray with confidence that He hears us, that we can go to Him with our needs, our fears, both the burdens and joys of our heart, and He will answer.
- But we need to always make sure that we understand that God is not some celestial Santa who exists only to give us what we want. We never can impose our will on God. It is "Thy will be done" not "Thy will be changed to suit my will". Rather as we pray and ask Him to show us His will, we demonstrate our trust in Him and our dependence on Him. Prayer is a request of a child to a loving Father and with every prayer we trust the will of our Father who loves us and only desires the highest and best for us. Still, we must bear in mind that His way and thoughts are not our ways and thoughts.
- Prayer such as this is a prayer God hears. He accepts it and takes hold of it. Just as human parents are quick to dismiss the frivolous requests of a child, so too does God not hear prayers that are offered out of greed, selfishness, or evil intent. The word John uses for "confidence" is *parresia*. It originally meant "freedom of speech". With God we have freedom of speech. He invites us in to His presence and allows us to speak whatever is on our heart, but we need to come into His presence with the right heart, the heart of Christ.

- Still, John is writing this letter to do away with the doubts of his churches. How do we know we are praying in such a way that God will hear? First, earlier in 3:22, we are told that we can pray with confidence if we keep His commandments. Obedience pleases God and as we are obedient, we come to see His will more clearly and are then better able to pray. Second, in the Upper Room with the disciples, Jesus says in John 15:7, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.” As John has told us previously in this letter, the whole of the Christian walk is all about living in Christ and living with Christ in you. This intimate relationship with Christ informs our prayer in the same way it informs our understanding of right and wrong. Without a better way of putting, this most intimate of relationships makes our request seem intuitive. We know, but we really can’t say how we know...we just know. Love is like that. Third, we need to understand our place in the relationship. We have a relationship with the Father through Jesus Christ and not of ourselves. So even though we may come before the Father whenever we wish, we never come before the Father alone. Jesus is always standing between us and the Father. Thus He tells us in John 14:14, “If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.” When we go to the Father and pray, put forward our request out of our obedience and through our relationship and in the name of Jesus, He will hear and answer.
- So, when we do pray rightly as a loving child to our loving Father, we can pray with the kind of confidence John is speaking of. (see Matthew 6:25-34)

Vss. 16-17

- True prayer is not telling God what we want but listening for what He wants. And what God wants is for people to be free from sin.
- Baptist have always insisted on personal responsibility on the question of sin. If you want to be forgiven, YOU have to repent and ask to be forgiven. But here, John is exploring the length of the confidence in prayer we have before God. “If anyone sees his brother”, his *brother*, that is, someone who is already a Christian and a church member, sinning, then we can pray, and pray with confidence, and ask God to forgive that brother and God will.
- Paul tells the Galatians in 6:2 that we are to “Bear one another’s burdens and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.” So while we are not priests in the sense that others must come

to us to approach God, nor do I need a priest to do so as I am able to go with Christ on my own before the throne of God, in a way we are all priests, walking along side one another, edifying one another, lifting each other up along the way.

- What's more, the New Testament is constantly pointing to the value of intercessory prayer. Paul asked the Thessalonians to pray for him and his friends (1 Thess. 5:25) and to Timothy he writes, "First of all, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men" (1 Tim. 2:1). If then we pray for those who are sick and ask God for healing, why then should we not pray for their spiritual health as well? If we pray for a sinner to be healed of a physical sickness is not our job only half done? And are we not commanded to love our brother? Is there a better way to love our brother than to seek his forgiveness before God and see him spiritually healed as well as physically healed?
- But John also says there is a sin leading to death, a mortal sin, a sin that God will not forgive. Matthew 12:31-32, Mark 3:29, and Luke 12:10 all report Jesus saying that to "blaspheme" against the Holy Spirit, to deny the power and existence of the Holy Spirit, is something that will not be forgiven. Indeed, it is the power of the Holy Spirit that is the primary expression of God in the world today, so to deny the Holy Spirit is tantamount to denying the Father and the Son. Further, see 1 John 2:22-23a; 4:1-3.
- God will not save those who do not want to be saved. But we may pray for our Sister or Brother in Christ who has sinned, those who hope in God's forgiveness, and they will be forgiven.