

The Last Eyewitness, XI

Confidence (1 John 5:13-21)

December 21, 2003

SO YOU MAY KNOW

John's Gospel was written to unbelievers so they would have powerful evidence for believing.

But these [miraculous signs] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. - *John 20:31 NIV*

John's letter is written to believers; and he tells us why:

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. - *1 John 5:13 NIV*

John doesn't want believers to *hope* we'll receive eternal life. He wants us to have assurance of it; and an understanding that:

- Eternal life is not based on feelings, but on facts.

An east-coast farmer interviewing workers came across a man who said his best quality was that he could sleep during storms. The farmer liked the man and gave him the job; and he was a great worker. But, one night a storm blew in and the farmer rushed to the man's bed and shook him, "There's a storm on us!" The man rolled over and said, "I told you I could sleep during storms." The angry farmer ran outside to secure everything. But he quickly discovered that the cows were already in the barn, the chickens in their coops, the haystacks covered, and the shutters secured. The farmer realized that his new worker could sleep during storms because he was prepared for them.

CONFIDENCE

To John, true faith is all about confidence, conviction, and certainty that comes from being prepared with the promises of the one who calms the storms.

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that **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. - *1 John 5:14-15 NIV*

- Notice that the emphasis is on **His will**, not ours.

And **if we ask according to his will he hears us**, which doesn't mean He turns a deaf ear to dumb prayers; "hears" means *grants*.

- He grants those requests that align with His perfect will.

In the Greco-Roman religions of John's day, the attitude was one of self-interest. The will of the worshiper was central, not the will of the idol being appeased or implored.

Q: When you pray, whose will are you seeking to fulfill?

Have you seen Bruce Almighty? God gives His power to Bruce, who ends up granting everyone's prayers. Bruce then learns a big lesson: people often pray for the wrong things.

[Bruce Almighty clip: 1:38; PG-13]

The confidence isn't that God is waiting to give us whatever we ask for. The confidence is in knowing that His will is *best* for me and He *desires* to listen to and answer my prayers.

The problem is, even when I want to pray according to His will, I have a hard time figuring it out. But if we really want His will over our own, there's something simple we can do.

John was in the Garden of Gethsemane the night Jesus prayed to God concerning going to the cross.

Going a little farther, [Jesus] fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, **if it is possible**, may this cup be taken from me. Yet **not as I will, but as you will.**" - *Matthew 26:39 NIV*

Be warned; this kind of praying is seen as *weak* by some:

- **If it is possible**? All things are possible with God!
- **Not as I will, but as you will**? Sounds like a disclaimer!

Q: Someone needs to teach this Jesus guy how to pray with faith!

This is a great example for matching our will to God's; it contains equal parts of trust and submission.

- I trust I'm in Your plans ... but is there a plan-B?
- If there isn't a plan-B I'll go along with plan-A.

When I pray for someone going into surgery, I'll say: Guide the doctors, grant a speedy recovery, and if it's Your will we would prefer miraculous healing (plan B).

- I don't doubt God's ability, I doubt my perspective.

Q: Didn't Jesus tell a leper his faith had made him well? (*Lk 17:19*)

A: Yes. But He was referring to who he had placed his faith *in*; not how he had conjured enough to perform the miracle himself.

I'm sure some tack on "God's will" to cover their doubt that God really listens, really cares enough to answer.

- I just want to honestly surrender my desires to His best.

There are two issues to consider:

1. We generally pray for the easiest way out of a situation.
2. Deep and lasting change comes from the difficult way out.

And so we see in Jesus' example, an abandonment of short-term gain and an authentic desire for God's will above all. If we pray this way, John says, we'll have what we've asked for.

DEATH SINS

If anyone sees his brother commit **a sin that does not lead to death**, he should pray and God will give him 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 he should pray about that.
- *1 John 5:16 NIV*

Q: What in the world is **a sin that does not lead to death**?

... the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. - *Romans 6:23 NIV*

Paul doesn't say "the wages of *some* sins are death," just: sin.

The key to this passage is John's audience: believers. **If anyone sees his brother ...** Paul was writing about unbelievers whose sin is not covered by the blood of Christ. Paul later says:

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. - *Romans 8:1-2 NIV*

As believers, our sins no longer lead to death (that is, they bring no condemnation in the life to come).

However, they do bring consequences in this life. So, John reminds us to pray for each other concerning our struggles.

There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that.
- *John 5:16 NIV*

He isn't forbidding us from praying for the lost! He's just clarifying that he's not suggesting that we should expect God to give life to someone apart from repentance.

All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death. - *John 5:17 NIV*

Q: So, if I only have to worry about the earthly consequences ... why not keep on sinning? Sounds like a fair trade!

I do that all the time with my wife. I know the consequences for what I want to say ... but the self-satisfaction; mmm! But when I make that trade and discover an awful truth.

- Broken fellowship is a universal consequence.

That's why I work to restore what I've damaged in my marriage relationship; and then work at not repeating it ... too often!

To accept or embrace broken fellowship with Christ as a life-style ... well, that type of hard-hearted rebellion places one in the category of those whose sin is leading them to death.

We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him. We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.
- *1 John 5:18-19 NIV*

John has made it clear the one who is in us is greater than the one who is in the world. (*1 John 4:4*) The devil may prowl around like a roaring lion (*1 Pet 5:8*) but he's definitely on a leash.

We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true – even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Dear children, keep yourselves from idols. - *1 John 5:20-21 NIV*

John says: Just one more thing; avoid any position, any loyalty, any device that would come between your heart and your Savior.