



**Conversation with God – Part 7**  
**1 John 3:21-24**  
**GCSP – 01/17/2009**

One of the great benefits of maturing in years is that you have the ability to gather up all the knowledge you have obtained and apply it to the problems of the day. One of the great curses of maturing in years is that you have this same ability to gather up all the knowledge you have obtained and apply it to the problems of the day. What I mean by that is far too often we have a tendency to overanalyze and apply way too much human logic to the troubles we face.

Children aren't like that. Children have a great confidence that someone, usually a parent, will always be there to take care of their troubles.

Childlike confidence makes us pray as nothing else can. It causes us to pray for great things that we would never have asked for if we hadn't learned to pray with childlike confidence. It also causes us to pray for little things that others are afraid to ask for because they have not yet experienced the intimate relationship of a child asking the Father for the desires of his heart.

By our actions, I believe it must be harder to ask for the little things than it is for the great things. Somehow we imagine that the great things are worthy of God's attention, though in truth they are quite little in His eyes, and the little things are so insignificant that it would be an insult to bring them before the Lord.

We need to readjust our thinking until we understand that although what is very important to a child may indeed be very small in the eyes of his parents, but the parent measures the importance through their child's eyes, not through his or her own.

If your little child was crying bitterly because he had a small splinter in his finger, you won't call in the best surgeons to handle it but you do understand that the pain of the splinter is indeed a great thing to the little boy. Standing there with tears streaming down his face it never occurs to the little boy that this is too small for you to worry about. What are parents made for other than to care for the concerns, small or large, of their children?

How much more does God the Father care for the concerns, both great and small, of His children? He calls the stars by name, He has the hairs on your head numbered, He sees every sparrow when it falls, and His arms were stretched out wide on a cross once and they are stretched out still today inviting you to run to Him and let Him take care of whatever concerns you today.

The aspect of prayer that I want us to grasp today is the aspect of childlikeness.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **1 John**.

**1 John 3:21-24**

Let's pray.

We have been studying how to prevail in prayer over the last six sermons together. We have discovered many things in many passages of Scripture that have opened my eyes at least, if not yours, to several aspects of prayer that I have missed through the years.

Before we dive into the characteristics of being childlike in our prayers there is an important point from our passage tonight that needs our attention. That point actually comes from what is not said more so than what is said. If we are to have confidence in our prayers because we keep His commandments and truly love one another as we should, then it is safe to say that that confidence will not be there if we are not keeping His commandments and not truly loving one another as we should.

Scripture is clear that the prayers of unholy people soon become an abomination to the Lord.

Hold your place in **1 John** and turn with me in your Bibles to the Prophecy of **Isaiah**.

### **Isaiah 1:13-15**

Churches and individuals can fall into such a state of sinfulness and iniquity that their prayers become powerless and even bring the wrath of God instead of His mercies. Unless it is a prayer of repentance it is in essence impossible for God to regard the intercessions of the one who holds evil in his or her heart. **Psalm 66:18**, says, **"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear."**

Beloved, our lives are nothing apart from God's sustaining power, and His power comes to us and works through us because of prayer. Prayer is essential to the life of this church and it is essential to my ability to be its pastor and to the leaders of this church to have the ability to lead. Of what use is this church without the divine blessings of God, and how can we expect this divine blessing apart from the church seeking God for it? I echo the Apostle Paul who simply and succinctly says in **2 Thessalonians 3:1**, **"Brethren, pray for us."** For it is only through prayer that the ministry and prosperity of this church will increase or even be maintained.

God has in store for us mercies, and blessings, and comforts, and provision, and protection, and favors, and infinitely more for our joy and happiness and fruitfulness, but they are not given to us irrespective of our behavior and character. The special favors of God come through our obedience as God's children.

Back in **1 John** we will begin to see the characteristics of childlikeness that is required for prevailing prayer.

1. Childlike Obedience - **"Whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments."**

If we lack childlike obedience we are likely to find ourselves in the same position the people of Israel did during the times of the Judges. God said to them, **"Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods; therefore I will no longer deliver you. Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your distress"** (**Judges 10:13-14**).

Any father will tell you that for him to grant the request of a disobedient child would be to encourage rebellion in the family and render it impossible for him to rule his own house as he is called by God to do. Is not the parent in essence required to say, "*My child, because you do not listen to my word I cannot listen to yours*"? Does not his or her love for the child bind them to show their love by refusing the request of the disobedient child?

According to our text this is how God shows His love to us. When we are stubborn in our sin and transgression, God says, "*I will not hear your prayer when you cry to Me. You are saved and you have the bread and water of life, but you shall have no more. The luxuries of My kingdom shall be denied you. Prevailing prayer you shall not possess.*"

In **Psalm 81** God says, "**Oh that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways! I would quickly subdue their enemies and turn My hand against their adversaries...I would feed you with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you**" (**Psalm 81:13-14; 16**).

If the disobedient child had the promise in his hands of "whatever you ask you receive" he would be sure to ask for something that would support his sin and rebellion. He would ask for provisions that would feed his lusts and carnal passions. Should God be a supplier for our corruptions? Should God add fuel to the fires of our ungodly passions?

A selfish heart will ask for greater liberty. A proud spirit will ask for greater elevation and glory. A lazy man will ask for greater ease. A domineering spirit will ask for more power. As is the man such will his prayer be. And should God answer prayers such as these? He will give us what we ask if we keep His commandments, but if we are disobedient and reject His way of doing things, if we reject His theocratic government and choose one of democracy then He will reject our prayers. Whatever we put in is what we will get out according to **Leviticus 26:21; 24**: "**If then, you act with hostility against Me and are unwilling to obey Me...I will act with hostility against you.**"

2. Childlike Reverence – "**Because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.**"

After childlike obedience comes childlike reverence. When a child is given a command from his father, the child is not allowed to question its validity or debate the wisdom of the command. Obedience ends where questioning begins. Did you catch that? Obedience ends where questioning begins.

The child who learns to simply do what his mother or father tell him to do is the one who is obedient and who reveres his parents. For this child it is enough that mom or dad told them to do something, and it is his desire to please his parents by his actions.

The same is true of us in our relationship with the perfect parent, God the Father. We can always rest assured that whatever pleases the Father is right and whatever displeases Him is wrong. If we choose to be self-willed and determine to do what pleases ourselves instead of what pleases God, we may as well pray to God with the request, "Let me have my own way! I want my own way in all things!"

The sad fact is that many Christians do in essence pray like that. They have no interest in what pleases God. They are looking out for number one, and in their universe they are number one; and by their actions they expect God to recognize that. God's house does not operate in this fashion; He does not listen to His self-willed children, unless it is to hear them in anger and respond to them in wrath.

In **Numbers 11** we have the account of the Children of Israel wanting things their own way in regards to the food God was providing them in the wilderness. God's response was to send them quail up their waist and have them eat until it was coming out of their nostrils. God also sent a plague and they buried many people in that place. They got what they wanted.

Childlike reverence is such that you pray, "Lord, if what I ask does not please you then it doesn't please me; and thus cancel my request. I place my desires into Your hands for correcting. Cross out any requests I make that does not please You, and fill in whatever has been omitted." Childlike reverence is a yielded spirit, and a yielded spirit is one that receives whatever he asks.

### 3. Childlike Trust – ***"This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ."***

After childlike obedience and childlike reverence, there must be childlike trust. We have seen many times already in our study on prayer that faith is required for prevailing prayer. As a refresher we just need to recall **Hebrews 11:6**, which says, **"And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."**

When Jesus touched the two blind men's eyes, He asked them if they believed He could heal them. They replied, **"Yes Lord"** and Jesus then said, **"It shall be done to you according to your faith"** (ref. **Matthew 9:27-29**).

Remember also when we looked at **James 1:5-7**: **"But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf on the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord."**

Faith, trust, and belief, in the name of His Son Jesus Christ are what is required for prevailing prayer. That means you believe everything about the Lord. That means you believe in His saving power, His character, His words, His healing power, His provision, His protection, His mercy, His wisdom, His knowledge, His authority, and in all other aspects of who He is. When you pray to God with this level of belief in the name of Jesus Christ, you are praying like this: "Father, do for me as You would have done for Jesus, for I am authorized by Him to use His name. Do it for me as you would have done it for Him."

When you can pray with faith in the name of Jesus you cannot fail, for Jesus Himself has said, **"Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be**

**glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it" (John 14:13-14).**

But there must be faith. If there is no faith then we will not be heard. Don't miss this. If you miss everything else I have said or will say, don't miss this. There must be faith in your prayers.

Suppose a child did not have enough faith in his father that there would be enough food in the house for tomorrow. That child might say, "Father, give me enough money so that I may buy food until I am a man out on my own. Calm my fears by doing this for me." The father may reply, "Son, why should I do this?" The son then says, "I am sorry but I do not trust you. I have such a weak faith in you and in your love for me that I fear you will one day leave me to starve, so I would like to have something sure in the bank."

How grieved would the father's heart be? Yet, he could not grant such a request to one who is so lacking in faith.

How many of us have treated God the Father in the same way? We are taught by the Lord to pray, "**Give us this day our daily bread**" while in our hearts we would be in a crazed panic if we only had enough food in the house for today, and thus had to rely on God to provide for tomorrow. God desperately tried to teach this concept to the Children of Israel as they wandered in the wilderness by providing their food on a day-by-day basis. God never missed in His provision yet they always wanted things their way; they always wanted to have some in store for the future just in case.

Just in case what? – God stops being God?

Beloved, if we are honest with ourselves we would have to admit that we often desire a better security than the promises of God. Even in these tough economic times we tend to trust our IRA's and 401(k)'s and pensions and bank accounts more than we trust the God who owns the cattle on a thousand hills and who owns all of the gold and all of the silver and all of the precious gems this world has ever seen.

In a thousand ways we insult the Lord by imagining the things we can see as more substantial than His unseen omnipotence and provision. We ask God to give us this moment what is not required at the present or may never be required at all. At the core of these desires to have more than we need is a disgraceful distrust in Him.

Shall God encourage your distrust? Shall he give you fat bank accounts and a healthy portfolio of investments for thieves to break in and steal? Shall he give you closets full of clothes so moths can break through and eat? Would you have the Lord appease your suspicions that He might forget to provide for you by answering selfish requests?

If this is your heart than I suggest you memorize and apply **Psalm 37:5** to you life: "**Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will do it.**"

4. Childlike Love – "**That we should believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.**"

To the qualities of obedience and reverence and trust, we must add childlike love for one another.

Drop down to **1 John 4** in your Bibles.

**1 John 4:7-12; 20-21**

Do you desire to have prevailing prayer in your life? Then you must fulfill the biblical command to love one another. We spent some time with this last time but since it is repeated time and time again in Scripture I guess God thinks it is profitable for us to deal with it time and time again.

Let's go back to our illustration of a human family. If you have two children who are always fighting or are ignoring each other or holding ill feelings toward each other, would you as the parent be pleased with that? What if one of your children came up to you and said they loved their brother or sister but their behavior toward them did not change? Would you be satisfied with that and lavish gifts upon the child who verbalized their love for their siblings but continued to fight with, ignore, or hold ill feelings toward?

Let's go back even further to any one of several sermons I have asserted this truth. What is the opposite of love? The opposite of love is selfishness. Genuine unconditional love will always do what is best for the other person and not what is best for you. Doing what is best for you at the expense of another is selfishness. Can God or should God trust a selfish spirit with the riches and mercies of heaven? And according to **1 John 4** is it possible to love God and not love our brothers and sisters in Christ?

My brother and I fought like cats and dogs when we were young. On many occasions I saw the heartbreak in my father's and mother's eyes. I can't tell you how many times I heard the admonition, "Be nice to your brother." Today, I love my brother like I should have all along. We don't always see eye-to-eye on everything but I love him anyway.

In the family of God it seems that any brother or sister that does not see eye-to-eye with us is an outcast. If push comes to shove we will verbalize that we love our brother or sister, but there isn't a soul alive that would recognize it as love; and you better believe God doesn't recognize it as love either.

Love isn't mere words. I love you means nothing if there isn't any actions to back it up. God said I love you and then hung on a cross in your place. God said I love you and rose from the grave. God said I love you and then gave us His Holy Spirit. God said I love you and then provided us a heavenly eternal home. Not once do I see in Scripture where God said I love you and then turned His back away while muttering, "But I don't like you very much."

We must love one another with the same love God has bestowed on us.

5. Childlike Spirit – **"The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us."**

The final characteristic of childlike confidence comes through having a childlike spirit. When the Lord makes His dwelling place within you and you make your dwelling place in Him, there will be a childlike joy and spirit that won't quit. You will live as if you do not have a care in the world.

When a child is living in the midst of tough economic times and in times of global terrorism and political unrest, are they pacing around the house wringing their hands with a worried frown on their brow? Or is the world around them the last thing on their mind as they busy themselves with their next game or next pursuit in joyful satisfaction?

We studied a few weeks back that abiding in Christ simply means to be filling your mind and heart with His Word. Jesus said, "**If My words abide in you...**" Let me ask you a question: If you are truly allowing God's Word to abide in you can the circumstances of the world take away your joy? If God's Word is abiding in you does it matter what trial or tribulation is on the horizon? If You are saturated with God's Word is there ever a time when you will give up?

So if you have a childlike spirit in this regard, exuding joy regardless of the situation, do you think the truth of our passage, "**whatever we ask we receive**" will be true to you? Do you think that "**whatever we ask we receive**" applies to you if you exhibit childlike obedience, childlike reverence, childlike trust, childlike love, and have a childlike spirit?

Consider the confidence of a child. I forget which child it was, but one of my boys was playing with some toy that glowed in the dark but it was the middle of the day. He was getting a little agitated that my mom couldn't make the apartment dark enough to enjoy the full measure of that toy. He immediately dropped to his knees and asked God to make it dark.

When was the last time you asked God to make it dark in the middle of the day? That's childlike confidence, and that is pleasing to the Lord, and that is reaching the point of applying "**whatever we ask we receive.**"

Let's pray.