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The Possibilities of Prayer

I John 5:6-14-15

INTRO: Prayer brings with it life's greatest possibilities. The power of prayer is greater than a thousand Niagras. James said, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16b). The prayer of a righteous man has great possibilities. The prayer of a righteous man gets results. W.A. Criswell says, "We go farthest when we go on our knees" (). Through prayer we have the possibilities of:

1. Power in the church.
2. Power in the pulpit.
3. Power in the pew.
4. Power in the nation.

Of course we are talking about spiritual power, not charisma or psychology. Anything that lasts will need to be done spiritually with prayer. "There is power in prayer, power to spare, all that you'll ever need is waiting right there."

I. VS. 14, BOLDNESS TOWARD GOD.

A. The word "confidence" is the Greek word *parresia* which means "cheerful courage, boldness, assurance."

1. It is because of our relationship to Christ that we have boldness towards God.
 - a. Because of what Jesus has done for the Christian, because of the shed blood of Calvary, we can boldly approach the throne of God (Heb. 10:19-22).
 - b. If you are saved, if you are in fellowship with God, you can boldly approach the throne through the blood.
2. Because we, the saved, are children of God, not strangers, we can boldly approach the Father (Eph. 2:19).
 - a. Before we were saved, we were strangers without hope and without God (Eph. 2:12).
 - b. As lost people, we had no right to go to God boldly.
3. The indwelling Spirit of God allows us to have boldness before the throne of God (Eph. 2:18).
 - a. When we trust Christ, we receive the Holy Ghost (Rom. 8:9).
 - b. Even when we do not know what to say in prayer, when we struggle to pray, the Holy Spirit is there to help us as we go before the throne of God the Father (Rom. 8:26-27). Spurgeon said, "'Groanings which cannot be uttered' are often prayers which cannot be refused" (Harvey 91).
4. The child of God needs to be a bold prayer warrior. Every Christian needs to see that we are in spiritual war and that prayer is a spiritual weapon. When we use spiritual battles then we can be assured of spiritual victory (II Cor. 10:4-5).

B. John says, "If we ask any thing according to His will He heareth us."

1. The word "ask" is *aito*: "to ask for something to be given."
 - a. Dr. John R. Rice said, "Prayer is asking" (49).
 - b. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to Him that knocketh, it shall be opened" (Matt. 7:7-8).
2. Since prayer is asking, prayer is definite; prayer is specific.
 - a. We are not to be indefinite in our praying. We are to be definite.

- b. We are to call out specific names of specific lost people in prayer.
 - c. We are to pray for our needs specifically and expect an answer.
 - d. Claim the promise of scripture in prayer.
3. Because prayer is asking and asking is definite. Then expecting an answer is believing. We are to believe that our prayers are going to be answered.
- a. "The first requirement of prayer is to believe. Believe that God is and that, 'He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him'. Believe that God is alive and therefore has power--not only for Peter's deliverance, but for ours. Believe that God is love and that he cares for His own. Believe that God is power and therefore no power can stand against Him. Believe that God is truth and therefore cannot lie. Believe that God is King and that He will never abdicate His throne or fail in His promise" (Leonard Ravenhill, Harvey 37).
 - b. Matt. 21:22 says, "What soever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."
 - 1.) You must believe that God hears your prayers.
 - 2.) Mark 9:24 says, "All things are possible to him that believeth."
 - c. When you pray be specific and expect an answer.

C. When we "ask.... according to His will, He heareth us." The Bible tells us that we can know the will of God (Col. 1:9). If you really want to know God's will, if you really desire God's will more than anything else, then you can know the will of God.

1. We must realize that God's will is always best for us. We must surrender ourselves to that fact (Rom. 12:1-2). "So when we 'ask anything according to His will', we are really asking for what is the very best for us" (Sanders 48).

a. We must believe that our prayers are denied only when they are not the very best for us. I am not going to give my child a rattlesnake no matter how much he cries for one.

b. "We, ignorant of ourselves, beg often our own harms, which the wise powers deny us for our good; so find we profit by losing of our prayers" (Shakespeare; Wuest 180).

2. God's will in moral and spiritual matters is clearly given to us in scriptures. By studying the Word of God, we clearly see God's will in the matters of:

- a. Sex.
- b. Marriage.
- c. Honesty
- d. Evangelism.

"Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

3. God also reveals His will to us by the Holy Spirit. As we draw close to God the Spirit of God guides our lives clearly letting us see what is best for us.

a. Through the Holy Spirit God burdens us for a certain person or situation.

b. When God lays a burden on our heart and the only relief we find is prayer, we can be assured this burden is the will of God.

II. VS. 15, THE POSSIBILITY OF ANSWERED PRAYER.

A. Twice in I John 5:15, the apostle uses the word "know." By using this word twice the apostle is assuring us of attaining an answer to our prayers.

B. Jack Taylor points out that God answers our prayers in four ways:

"Sometimes God's answers to prayer are direct. Sometimes God's answers are different. Sometimes God's answers are delayed. Sometimes God's answers are denied" (Taylor 155).

1. Sometimes God's answer to our prayer is direct.

a. There are times when God's answer to our prayer is direct, it is right on the spot as in the case of God's answering Abraham's prayer for a bride for Isaac as seen in Gen. 24.

b. God said in Jere. 33:3: "Call unto me and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not."

- c. Isaiah 65:24 says, "Before they call, I will answer."
 2. There are times when God's answer to our prayer is different from what we expected.
 - a. God sometimes gives us more than we ask for.
 - b. God wants to bless us, He wants us to expect great things from Him.
 3. There are times when God's delays in answering our prayers.
 - a. Again God knows what is best. He is sovereign and there are times when He delays an answer for our good and His glory.
 - b. In John 11, we have the story of Lazarus who was sick. Through the sickness and death of Lazarus, Jesus was glorified. Jesus delayed answering their prayer "that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."
 4. There are times when God's answer to our prayer is denial. He hears our prayer, but in mercy there are times He says no.
 - a. When I was in Bible College in Louisville, Ky. I prayed to be an evangelist. I went to Ocean Springs, Ms. to work with the Gulf Coast Baptist Temple for a year as I scheduled meetings that year. God closed every door, I had no meetings, and God answered my prayer by saying no. I have been very happy as a pastor and God has opened many doors for me in conferences and revivals. I am glad that God said no to my prayer.
 - b. Remember God knows what is best for us. Don't pry open a door God has closed.

CONCLUSION: There are great possibilities through prayer. We need to pray expecting an answer.
"God does nothing but by prayer, and everything with it" John Wesley (Harvey 9).
"Every great movement of God can be traced to a kneeling figure" D.L. Moody (Harvey 9).