

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.¹⁴ This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him. (NIV84)

Theme: Pray Confidently.

1. We have been reconciled to God.
2. He will give us what is prayed according to his will.

Confidence is important. Some might say it is vital to success. When a team takes the field it must be confident that they can compete and win. If they're not confident then they'll probably get blown out. Before you ask someone out on a date you have to be confident in yourself and that she somewhat likes you and that there is a possibility that she'll say yes—someone will rarely say yes to a date to someone who is sheepish or insecure. If you are going to stand in front of people and talk—maybe it's teaching, giving a sermon, a presentation, or something else—you must feel confident in your material and in yourself otherwise you are going to stumble all over your words and look awkward to everyone listening and watching you. If you are trying to sell someone something you need to be confident in either your ability to sell anything, or you have to be confident in the product—that is essentially sells itself.

Confidence is important. Confidence is also important when it comes to our prayers. We can pray confidently because Christ has reconciled us to God and because he has promised to give us anything we ask according to his will

A big part of being confident is believing or knowing that you actually belong—that you deserve to be doing what you are doing. A high school football team knows it doesn't belong on the same field as an NFL team; and they would have absolutely no confidence going into the game. I have absolutely no medical training or knowledge, so I would not be confident standing in front of a group of doctors telling them about all the latest medical procedures. A king has a group of trusted advisors—and they all address him with the same sort of honor

and respect. Not just anyone can stand before a king, and it would be pretty brazen of someone not known to the king to tell him to his face what he should do or complain about what he is doing.

He wouldn't belong. And if you know you don't belong and if you know that you don't deserve to be doing what you are doing, confidence is often lost. Now sure, there are some who are confident no matter what they are doing; perhaps they aren't self-aware or they simply do not care what other people think about them. But for most people, if we don't feel as if we belong then we don't feel confident. And the truth is we don't belong before God. He is perfect, holy, just, Almighty, All-knowing. We are sinful, weak, we die, we are enemies of God by nature, there is nothing good that lives in us and God is nothing but love. In short, he is God and we are not—we are his creation who rejected him and became sinners.

If someone has done something wrong, they don't want to be standing before a king, or even a judge. We know that we are sinners. We know that we have failed to live the perfect life that God demands of us. We know that we don't belong before God. As Asaph wrote in Psalm 76, **You alone are to be feared. Who can stand before you when you are angry?** We have no right to stand before God and address him. We have no reason to be confident before him. We don't belong. It doesn't matter how good you are or what you have done, there is not a single one on this earth who has any reason to be confident enough to pray to God boldly and to ask him for anything, as if he would grant your request, let alone hear you.

And so came Christ. It is our sins that separate us from God and his love. But Christ removed the guilt of all our sins, forgiving them, when he suffered and died on the cross. The price of his own blood paid the price and he suffered through the eternal damnation that we deserve. His resurrection is proof that God accepted his payment that are sins have been removed.

Christ has restored us to a right relationship with God. We are reconciled to him once again. The Lord no longer looks at us as his enemies, but he sees us as he redeemed children. We are now heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ! What led to our lack of confidence before God has been removed. In Psalm 130 we read, **If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness.**

In Christ we aren't afraid to stand before God. And that is something that we'll do forever in heaven. That was one of the reasons why John wrote this letter—so that we may know that we have eternal life. Notice what John says about eternal life. We have it. In the present—not the future. We have, in the here and the now, we have eternal life. This is not something we have to hope for, not something that we wish we can have in the future. We have eternal life right now. Christ has already paid for our sins and he has risen from the dead. Everything for our forgiveness and eternal life has already been done. So our eternal life is already ours through faith in him. We know and we believe that we have already eternal life.

And yet eternal life is not something we can fully understand and comprehend as we live in this world full of sin. So we long for heaven, we long for the Last Day. Then we will fully realize the glory and splendor of heaven. Then we will comprehend how great and glorious our Lord truly is as we live with him in heaven forever.

Because of Christ we will live with the Lord and see him in his full glory in heaven. And because of Christ we are able to pray to God with confidence. We can pray to God with confidence because we do belong—our sins have been forgiven and stand as pure and innocent before God. Paul is talking about Christ when he says in Ephesians three, **In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.**

Through faith in Christ and because of him we are children of God. He has adopted us and made us his own through the waters of baptism. Along with Christ we know that we will inherit eternal salvation. A child is not afraid of his parents. A young child has no problem coming up to his father and asking for whatever he wants. So it is with God. Because of Christ we aren't afraid to approach God, we aren't afraid to ask for anything that we want in prayer. For Christ allows us to approach our Heavenly Father. Paul says in Romans 8, **you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.**

And so we can pray to the Lord with confidence. But we have even more reasons to pray with confidence. John says in verse 14, **This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.** Everything we ask

according to God's will, he will hear us. And if he will hear us we know that he will give it to us.

So what exactly is God's will? God desires to bless us, to do what is good for us. He loves us. He has no desire to harm us to give us something that is bad for us. This is what Jesus taught his disciples after teaching them the Lord's prayer in Luke 11. No father is going to give a snake or a scorpion to his young child. Why? Because that would harm him. If we sinful human being know enough not to give something potentially hazardous to our children, how much more will the Lord give good gifts to us!

It may seem as if the Lord doesn't answer our prayers. We may think that we never get what we pray for. And then we may come to the conclusion that the Lord doesn't hear our prayers, or he doesn't love us enough to give us what we want.

But the exact opposite is true. God always hears the prayers of his children and he loves us. He wants to give us what will be good for us in our spiritual lives. The Lord also knows far more than we do.

Perhaps he knows that what you ask for wouldn't be a blessing to you, but would actually harm you. Maybe he knows that if he would allow you to win the lottery you would forget about him, or that your sickness or disease is actually good for you in that it reminds you of your weakness and to rely on Christ for all things, or maybe if you got that job you wouldn't be able to attend worship on Sunday mornings. That is why we pray everything according to God's will—not our own will. This is one thing that makes prayer and act of worship. When we pray we leave it all up to Christ, to know what is best for us to know what to give us. We leave it all up to him and know that whatever he gives us it will be good and beneficial to us.

We may not always see the benefit—maybe we don't realize it until many years down the line, or maybe not until heaven. But we know and trust in God and know and believe that he loves us and will do what is best for us. And so when we pray according to his will, he will answer us.

And there is one request that the Lord will always grant, one prayer that he will always hear and answer. And that is a prayer for a stronger faith and an increased knowledge of his Word. For it is his will that we grow and faith and knowledge of him and his Word. And he answers that prayer through the means of grace. Through the sacraments of baptism and communion, through the Word, he

increases our knowledge of his Word and strengthens our faith! Faith is not something that comes magically, but through the means of grace. That is a prayer that the Lord will always hear and that the Lord will always bless.

Confidence is important. And while it is not vital for a prayer to be successful, we know that we can pray with confidence for many reasons. First, of course, is because of Jesus who has removed our sins and given us his perfect life and so enables us to approach God like a child his father and ask for anything. We can also pray with confidence because the Lord promises to hear and answer the prayers of his children and promises not to give us anything that will hurt or harm us, but will always bless us in our spiritual lives. Let us, then, pray to God boldly and confidently, let us pray continually. For our God loves us and wants to bless us. We can hold him to his Word to bless us. For that is what our gracious and loving Savior wants to do. In that, we have confidence! Amen.