

1 John 5:14-21: When You Feel Powerless, Pray Confidently

Tommy Meador / General Adult

1 John / 1 John 5:14–21

Introduction

- https://www.huffpost.com/entry/swiss-driver-facing-up-to-110000-in-fines-for-speeding_n_689cb175e4b03bdc47503109 - a powerless situation - under the law that doesn't care about your excuses or your situation.
- Maybe you know that feeling of being powerless: at work, a boss who piles on more than you can handle; at school, a professor who grades unfairly; at home, circumstances you can't change. Or maybe it's a sickness doctors can't fix, or a sin that refuses to let go
- What do you do when you feel powerless? You go to the Lord with confidence. He is the ONE with all power, and He is the ONE who loves you and desires the best for you even in your worst situations.
- He has the POWER to give you peace, wisdom, confidence, assurance, joy, and hope.
- He desires for you approach Him with boldness asking for His will to be done in your life.
- These final verses are a call to pray - to pray with boldness and assurance - to pray expecting God to work in our lives.
- Ask yourself: do you pray like your life depends on God's power, or like He's unable to act? John wants us to know this: **God's children pray with confidence because the One who holds the universe also holds their hearts.**

Pray boldly for God's will in your life.

- **vs. 14-15** - Connected to vs. 13 (KAI “and” NOT in the CSB).. AND this is the confidence...
- Since we know we have eternal life given to us by a loving Father, we can also know that He hears our prayers and answers according to His will. A huge promise!
- John knows THIS is the promise of Jesus. He was in the upper room when Jesus made the promise that the Father would answer our prayers ([John 16:23-24](#)).
- For many, you struggle to pray with confidence because your prayers feel weak and puny. You don't pray enough, your prayers don't feel effective. We all feel like our prayers are weak - but our confidence comes in knowing that the Spirit intercedes for us ([Romans 8:26-27](#)).
- For many, this seems like wishful thinking because you feel like many of your prayers have not been answered. Three realities:
 - You may not be able to perceive how God answered until years later. (Hindsight is often a better perspective.)
 - God is work at work in your life as you pray regardless if you see it or feel it.
 - Some unanswered prayers because you are not praying in the will of God.
- Key phrase: “we ask according to His will.” John Stott: “Every true prayer is a variation on the theme ‘Your will be done.’” At the heart of all of our heart's cries is a desire to see God's will done because we know His will is perfect and good - this is the prayer of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- **How do you know if you are praying in the will of God?**

- **Your prayer aligns with God's revealed desires**, "God, help me grow in Christlikeness. Help me live on your mission. Show me sin in my life that I need to repent of, help me be a spouse/parent that leads my family to know you. Help me to love well even when it's hard."
- **Your prayer is motivated by God's glory**. When praying for God's will, ask a simple question. If God answered this prayer; would it glorify Jesus, or just make my life easier?
- **How do you know if you are not praying according to God's will?**
 - **Your prayer contradicts Scripture**. e.g., "Help me get revenge." Or, "Bless my marriage" when you're married to or wanting to marry someone who is not equally yoked.
 - **Your motives are selfish**. "God, get me out of this job." You want life to be easier, but God may want you to be salt and light in a difficult situation.
 - **Your unwilling to repent of sin**. Unrepentant sin will shape your motives and cause you to be outside the will of God.
 - **Your prayer life looks more like a shopping list than surrender**. Prayer is intended to bring you into alignment with God's will, not to bring God into alignment with your will.

Pray fiercely for the holiness of others.

- Think of how the church could be a mighty force for the Kingdom of God if we loved like Jesus and walked in holiness.
- If we're going to live out God's mission well, then we must love and we must walk in holiness.
- It should grieve our hearts when we see a brother or sister NOT walking in holiness. And, because we love our brothers and sisters with the love

of Jesus, the sins of others should move us to pray fiercely for their holiness.

- vs. 16 “anyone sees” - visible sin - we can see it and the affects on their life. “Committing a sin that doesn’t lead to death.” Talking about spiritual death. This is assurance. Your sin DOESN’T lead to eternal death if you are in Christ. BUT, sin does hinder God’s will being accomplished in our lives. So, when we see brothers or sisters in sin, we don’t run to gossip, we run to pray.
- We run to God in prayer trusting that God can draw the sinner back to Himself and trusting that God knows how to discipline someone to get their attention.
- If I’m going to pray for someone’s holiness, then I must be pursuing holiness in my own life.
- As a church:
- **We expect God to sanctify.**
- **We reject easy believism.** We don’t sweep sin under the rug and say, “As long as they believe they’re ok.”
- **We welcome accountability.**
- **We reject meddling.** (What we tend to do when someone is in sin. Gossip, criticism, judgment, tearing down, isolating, giving up on someone, etc.)
- **We provide refuge.** (This is NOT a place of judgment, but a place of grace and a place to help you overcome your sin.)
- **We reject anonymity.** We don’t want you to hide from accountability. We want you to be known.
- **Who must you pray for? How would God lead you to act on that prayer?** More patience? More grace? A gracious confrontation of the truth?

- Difficult verse: “There is sin that leads to death” (vs. 17). Likely talking about false teachers who were apostates. Hearts were hard, and their rejection of the truth about Jesus would ultimately eternally damn them. John not saying to NOT pray for them but recognizing that we should spend more time praying for brothers and sisters to walk in holiness because of how it affects the mission of the church.
- vs. 17 - Be clear that all sin is defiance against God. However, also be assured again, that while God calls us to walk in holiness, we’re not perfect. When you sin, you can have confidence that God has forgiven you and will continue to forgive you. That confidence should compel you to pursue holiness.

Pray humbly for insight to discern the enemy’s schemes.

- vs. 18-21 - John summarizing what he has already been telling believers. Followers of Jesus don’t live in habitual, unrepentant sin (vs. 18).
- John gives one last reminder to assure us - God keeps you ([Ps. 121](#)). You’re protected by God, and the evil one cannot touch you. Does not mean that the enemy does not influence or tempt, but he cannot take away what God has done in your life.

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand” [John 10:27-29](#).

- Doctrine of eternal security - we believe “once saved, always saved.” Followers of Jesus persevere to the end. That’s really good news that fuels us to go to war against our sin.

- vs. 19 - We do not belong to the evil one, but that does not mean we do not need to be aware of the schemes of the enemy. We know the true One (vs. 20), but we also know that the enemy seeks to take our eyes off of Jesus ([1 Peter 5:8-9](#)).
- The enemy often lures our hearts away from God through idolatry (vs. 21). Interesting that these are the final words of John in this letter since he doesn't talk about idolatry anywhere else in the letter. But, John knows that this is how the enemy attacks believers - he deceives us into thinking the things of this world are more appealing/important than God. When we give in to idolatry, we begin to struggle in our walk with the Lord, doubt His goodness, forget His promises, etc.
- What if you had a daily action plan to keep you focused in the battle against the enemy? For example:
- **In the morning: Rise and pray for God's protection over your life.**
- **At mid-day: Ask yourself, "What am I elevating above God today?"** Personal preferences, desires for your own success, comfort, lusts of the flesh, etc.
- **In the evening: Reflect on how you saw God at work in your life throughout the day.** If you weren't aware of God's work, was it because you had drifted into idolatry? Repent, go to bed and rest, and start again tomorrow. If you have failed God today, He hasn't failed you. His mercy is new every morning (Lamentation 3:22-23).
- 1 John has reminded us that we can know we have eternal life. Do you have eternal life? Have you placed your faith in Jesus, believing that He died and rose again for you? Have you repented of your sins? Today, surrender to Him.
- Followers of Jesus, how is God leading us to pray according to His will this morning? How is God leading us to pray for others? Let's pray with full confidence that God hears us and responds according to His will.

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