

The Christian Arsenal

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1 JOHN 5:13-21

When we started our study in the Book of 1 John, I pointed out that one of the principle reasons John wrote this book was to assure the believer of his salvation.

So often when you ask someone if they're going to heaven when they die, they will say, "I'm trying to..." or "I hope so." But God wants us to **know** so!! He doesn't want us to have a "**hope so**" salvation...He wants us to have a "**know so**" salvation.

John gives us a definite guideline in this little epistle...a definite list of requirements...not to **be saved**...but to know we **are saved**!

Let's just look at this list together...

- 1) Am I obedient? **2:3-5**
- 2) Do I love the brethren? **2:14**
- 3) Does the Holy Spirit live in me? **3:24**
- 4) Does Jesus abide in me? **5:12**
- 5) Do I practice righteousness? **2:29**
- 6) Do I believe Jesus is the Christ? **5:1 and 13**
- 7) Are my prayers answered? **5:14**

God doesn't want His children to live in doubt.

Verse 13...

I will never forget counseling with a precious 81 year old lady several years ago. She had come to move her letter to our church. She had joined a local church...been baptized by R. G. Lee many, many years before. So, as far as I knew when we went into the counseling room, this was just routine.

But guess what? Miss Mary couldn't tell me for certain she was saved. She said, "Well, I think I am...I hope I am..." When I told her, "Oh, Miss Mary, God wants you to know", she couldn't believe it.

To make a long story short, Miss Mary gave her heart to Jesus that very night! "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that **you have eternal life.**"

This word "**know**" is "**an absolute knowledge.**"

Now, you might not remember the date...you might not remember much at all about the details. Many of us were saved as children and we just can't recall the details.

The essential thing is this...

Do you know beyond any question that Jesus Christ lives in your heart right now?

If He isn't there now...He never has been there...and if He's ever been there at any time...He's still there!

Verses 14-15...

One of the most important privileges we have as a Christian is prayer. If we want the blessings of God upon our lives, if we want true fellowship with God, if we want His **direction** and **guidance** and **anointing**...we need to know something about the privilege of prayer.

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We can take courses that are designed to teach us how to pray more effectively...we can read books on prayer and there are some great ones out there...(E. M. Bounds)...but the bottom line is this...the best way to learn about prayer is just to pray.

It amazes me that we so neglect prayer. Folks, the Creator of this universe...the Savior of our souls invites us into His presence and we get so busy many times that we don't accept His invitation.

For some reason God often limits Himself to the prayers of His people. He says, "I will if **you** will".

When we consider prayer we must also consider certain guidelines for prayer...

1) **Matthew 21:22...**

"Whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing you shall receive."

You must believe God hears us and that it's within His power and plan to answer.

2) **John 14:14...**

"If you ask anything in My name, I will do it."

What does it mean to do something in someone's name? It means we're doing what they would have us do, doesn't it?

When we pray we must be able to say, "Father, I believe this prayer is a prayer that Jesus would pray.

3) **John 15:7...**

"If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you."

We have to be in fellowship with God. If we're not right with God, if there is known sin in our lives, then God will not hear our prayer.

The psalmist said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Psalm 66:18

4) John says in **verse 14...**

"And this is the confidence we have before Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."

Even Jesus prayed, "Not My will, but Thine be done..."

God will answer any prayer that is in accordance with His will.

Well, if that's the key to getting our prayers answered...then how do we know that we are praying according to His will? How do we know what the will of God is? I don't believe God plays games with us...He doesn't put His will in a box and hide it and sit back and says, "Now, I dare you to try and find it!"

By the same token, He doesn't fly a plane across the sky with a banner trailing behind it proclaiming His will. No...

1) **There is the teaching of God's Word.**

God's will is revealed in His Word. God shows us His desires in His Word. You discern the will of God as you study the Word of God. God's will for your life will never contradict the teachings of God's Word.

The more we saturate ourselves in His Word, the more we become familiar with **His ways, His character, His desires and His will.**

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2) There is also the leading of the Holy Spirit. As you pray and surrender your will to His, the Holy Spirit will guide you into His will for your life.

The Holy Spirit makes intercession for us with groaning that cannot be uttered.

Prayer that is in the will of God begins in Heaven...then comes to our hearts and out our mouths and back to Heaven!

Somehow the Holy Spirit puts an impression on your heart and He takes the Word of God and He makes it real in your life and through it He gives us direction in your prayer life.

So, we must **desire** God's will and we must desire it enough to get into His Word. Then, we must **discern** the will of God by being in tune with the Holy Spirit, and then we must **do** the will of God. This involves total submission and surrender.

Verse 15...

When we know we're praying in His will...we don't have to wonder if He hears...we know He hears us!

A man traveling in China went into a beautiful temple dedicated to hideous idols. There he saw a throng of worshipers taking pieces of paper on which something had been written, folding them up, and then with mud making a ball and throwing the mudballs at the idols. The traveler asked the guide about the meaning of this. "These people are writing out their prayers to their god. If it sticks to the statue, their god hears their prayer; if it does not stick, their god does not hear their prayer."

I've told the story before of going to Japan a number of years ago. Our host took us on a tour of a huge Shinto village up in the mountains of the Nikko countryside. I noticed our host didn't translate very much of what the Shinto priest who was leading the tour was saying to us. Finally, I asked Mr. Kameda, our host, if he was a follower of Shinto and he informed me that it was not a polite thing to ask that question in Japan.

Well, later as we came down out of the mountains, the driver stopped at a Buddhist temple and we got out and just sort of walked through it on our own. We came into a room where there was a huge Buddha and there was Mr. Kameda throwing coins into a little pan that was setting in front of Buddha. (No wonder Mr. Kameda didn't think it very important to translate to us what the Shinto priest was telling us...)

Beloved, we serve a God who gives us assurance that when we ask **in Jesus' name**, when we ask **believing**, when we're **in fellowship with Him** and when we ask **according to His will**, we can know our prayers are going to be answered...and we don't have to throw mudballs or coins at some cold, dead statue!!

So, we know God answers our prayers...but how?

Well, let's think of the ways God answers our prayers...

1) Sometimes God answers quickly...right away...**directly!**

Remember when Eliezer went looking for a bride for Isaac...he came to the well and began to pray something like this: "O God, I want You to lead me to the one who is to be the bride for my master...I pray that you will send the one that I am to take back to my master." The Bible says

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that before he was through praying, God sent the answer. That is an example of God answering praying directly.

2) Sometimes God answers are **delayed**...

In John 11, Lazarus died and Mary and Martha sent for Jesus to come and what did He do? He waited three days before He went and raised Lazarus from the grave.

3) Sometimes we ask for one thing and God delivers something **different**. But, we can rest assured the "something different" is far better than what we asked for...

Paul said, "...He is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think..."

Sometimes the answer is **direct**. Sometimes the answer **delayed**. Sometimes the answer is **different**, and

4) Sometimes God's answer is **denial**.

Sometimes God says, "NO." And I'm so glad He does. He knows what's best for me! What if you had given your children everything he ever wanted?

Ruth Graham says if God had said "Yes" to all her prayers she would have married the wrong man seven times before she ever married Billy!

John MacArthur says there are 4 possible answers that we can expect from God each time we pray...

- 1) "No, not yet..."
- 2) No, I love you too much..."
- 3) Yes, and I thought you'd never ask..."
- 4) Yes, and there's so much more..."

Verses 16-17...

Now, let's remember this letter is written to believers!

When God saved us, He put us in a big family...We're all in the Christian life together. We're sisters in Christ!!

There's something I can contribute to your Christian life that will cause you to grow in the Lord. And there's something you can contribute to my Christian life that will make me a more mature child of God.

God doesn't want His children to live isolated lives!

We need each other and because of this we're able to see each other's failures and faults. We all stumble...all of us sin...all of us do things we ought not do...**a wrong habit...a wrong word...a wrong attitude**. And, these things hurt our testimony for Christ.

By the way...it's fairly easy to recognize sin in someone else's life, isn't it? I love flip calendars and I read this on one of mine recently...When a man saw another believer sinning, he said, "**Ah! Well, yes, it seems very bad to me, because that's not my way of sinning.**" We don't all sin the same way, but rest assured...we all do sin!

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Well, what do you do when you see a brother or sister sin (and by the way, notice the word “see”...this doesn’t mean we’re to “hear” about the sin...we’re to see it for ourselves)?

Do you run to the phone and call 4 or 5 of your friends and report it? Or, do you say, “Well, I knew he’d stumble eventually...I knew it would be just a matter a time...”

Or, do you do what this passage of Scripture says to do? John says if you will ask, if you will pray...God will give the sinning person life! That means we can, through our prayers for this person, be instrumental in his restoration.

There are members of our church...members of our own class...saved folks...who have somehow gotten out of the will of God. They’ve perhaps not grown. They’ve not been in the Word like they should. They’ve perhaps committed a sin that has driven them even farther away...

John says we have the privilege and responsibility of going to God in prayer for them...and I firmly believe we need to do more of this!

For example...I believe we need to covenant together in prayer for our absentee members!! I want to challenge all of us to pray for each member of our class. I hope you Group Leaders are praying for each member on your group each day. There are folks on our roll who haven’t been all year...

<They need intercessory prayer. This is not an
<option, Beloved...this is a commandment! >

God’s Word tells us to forsake not the assembling of ourselves together as is the manner of some...so unless they’re going somewhere else...they are committing a sin by not assembling here.

So, let’s do what John says...Let’s pray for our dear sisters!

There’s a time to pray...but then John tells us in the latter of **verse 16** that there’s a time **not** to pray. What does John mean?

Well, let’s see first what this does not mean...

- 1) It does not mean the **unpardonable sin**. How do we know this? Because the unpardonable sin is committed by an unbeliever and this is written to believers.
- 2) It does not mean **spiritual death**. How do we know that? Because believers will never experience spiritual death. This means physical death.
- 3) It does not mean **a specific sin**. The word “a” is not in the original text. It should read “There is sin leading to or leaning toward, or moving in the direction of death.”

John is speaking here of sin that a believer can commit that leads to physical death. **Let me also add that it isn’t the same sin for every person.**

This is a very serious word of caution for you and me. It is possible for a Christian to so continue in an attitude of rebellion before God and it so hinders his Christian testimony that God will just take him home early...ahead of time. He will be saved “so as by fire” as Paul tells us in **1 Corinthians 3**, but he will suffer loss.

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There are several examples of this in Scripture. Moses and Aaron are examples. Remember from our recent study in Numbers? Remember how Moses struck the rock and thus marred the picture of Christ the rock portrayed...and God said, "Moses, because you didn't obey Me and didn't treat Me as holy in the sight of the people, you will not enter the Promised Land."

In fact, Moses and Aaron died just before the children of Israel entered the Promises Land, didn't they?

Well, you might say... "but that was Old Testament...that was under the Law...what happens under Grace?"

An example of this in the New Testament is Ananais and Sapphira...they lied about their gift to the Lord and the Lord killed them.

Another example of this in the New Testament is found in **1 Corinthians 11**. Paul tells us of folks who were taking the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner... "For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep."

There are other examples both in the Old and New Testaments...but let me just say this...not every believer who dies suddenly or at a young age is guilty of committing sin unto death...**but some are!!!**

Look at **verse 16** again...

John says, "Don't pray for them...leave them alone."

Now, I cannot tell you when the time comes that you shouldn't pray for a believer who is sinning. I think we ought to pray **as much** and **as long** as we can for other Christians.

Sometimes, however, we pray for someone and then there comes a time when God seems to stop us...He simply releases us from the burden we're under to pray for them.

And, I can't tell you when that time will come...but somewhere along the way, there comes a time when God may say, "That's enough..."
God gave this instruction to Jeremiah and He gave it to Joshua and He will give it to you when the time comes.

This is serious business, Beloved...I believe this should serve as a warning to all believers...ourselves included...that we mustn't flirt with any kind of sin...**it just may be sin that leads to death for us!**

Verses 18-21...

Very briefly, let's think of truths we see in these closing verses of **1 John**...

- 1) The Christian does not continue in habitual sin. Sin is not the lifestyle of a Christian.
- 2) The Christian is kept by Jesus. Folks, we can no more keep ourselves that we can save ourselves.
- 3) The Christian is of God. He is our Source and our Strength. By contrast, the world is ruled by the enemy and he is the world's source and strength.

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4) The Christian has been given understanding.

There's only one truth, Beloved. Don't you get weary of hearing folks say, "Everybody's trying to get to heaven...they're just going different ways." **There is only one way...and only one truth!**

Lastly, John tells us to guard ourselves from idols.

This seems sort of disconnected from what he's just said...but I believe he's saying, "Reality and truth are in the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore keep yourselves from unreality. Keep yourselves from idols."

An idol is **anything or anyone** who comes between you and God. If you live your life with an idol before you...when you come to the end and you call on your idol there won't be any answer because that idol is not real.

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John has written this letter that we might know we have salvation...

***So I want to ask you  
Do you know you have this salvation?***

***If you're not certain...you can be...why not today?***