

Pray With Confidence - 1 John 5:13-15 – (18 Jan 15)

And we come to 1John chapter 5 and verses 14 to 15, and let me read these two verses to you. This will be the basis of our thinking this morning

And this is the confidence that we have toward him,
that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.
And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask,
we know that we have the requests
that we have asked of him.

(1 John 5:14-15 ESV)

Today's subject is a very straightforward one familiar to Christians and non-Christians alike. We are looking at a subject of prayer, and we all know as Christians that God has given us the Bible, God has given us a tremendous privilege in prayer and the Christian man must move forward upon his knees.

One of my spiritual heroes of the faith is Hudson Taylor, he is a medical doctor who went to be a missionary in China, gave his life to the Chinese people. And this is what his son, Howard Taylor has to say about Hudson Taylor. He said, his dad, about his dad,

“These 40 years have not seen the sun rise in China without my father kneeling in prayer”

Hudson Taylor is a man greatly used of the Lord because he was a man who spent much time with the Lord in the place of prayer.

I learned that in the Christian life, we can only move forward upon our knees and so, in 1John chapter 5 today we are looking at how we can move forward upon our knees. This is about knee work. This is about prayer. You see, John has been teaching us about the real life, he has been telling us about the eternal life, it's about the life with God, but many a times these things may sound so far, so distant, so in-the-future. But, he is saying from now till then, from now till the day we see Jesus again, you will go through sufferings, you will go through trials, you will go through pains, but you're not alone because you have a God who hears and answers prayer.

So this morning, this is the context. Why, John, I believe, in the closure of this epistle teaches about prayer, the God who answers prayer, and that helps us in our journey through life.

The three simple things I want us to look at this morning, the first one begins with C, it's confidence in prayer.

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(1 John 5:14-15 ESV)

See John says this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

This is unique to the Christian. The Christian, when he prays, can have confidence that God hears us. It's not available to many religions. There is a story of a temple in which there is an idol, a statue and people all over the world would go to the temple, to the statue to pray. But they say, you will never really know whether your prayers are answered until you do this, they say: You take up mud from around the floor mould it into a ball and throw at the idol, from a distance. If the mud ball sticks on his belly, your prayers will be answered. But if the mud ball misses its belly, or if it slips down, your prayers will not be answered.

That's the way people think about prayer. I throw some prayers at my deity and hopefully, he hears me. But that's not the kind of understanding we have as Christians. Christians have a certain confidence that our God hears us when we pray. Now, however, we are so influenced by what we see, by other religions and people who worship in other forms that maybe as a Christian, we too have a doubt as to whether God hears us.

A preacher, a pastor, his name is Ray Stedman, he says this

For many Christians prayer is a venture, an experiment.

There is nothing very certain about it.....

But you do not see that attitude in the Apostle John.....

There is a great and ringing note of certainty there.

Prayer is not an experiment,
Prayer is a certainty with John, a sure thing.
He knows it works, and he knows how it works.

For many Christians, prayer is a venture, an experiment. In other words, "try, try lah, not sure whether my God will hear me, but I try lah." It's a venture, it's an experiment, there is nothing very certain about it. But you do not see that attitude in the apostle John. There is a great and ringing note of certainty there. Prayer to him is not an experiment. Prayer is a certainty, a sure thing, he knows it works and he knows how it works.

So I want to say to all of us, this morning, maybe if you reflect on what you have prayed for in the past week, some of your prayers are made with a hopeful spirit, "aaah, not really sure whether God hears me but I will just anyway, I would just throw the prayers on the deity and hope it sticks." But John is saying to us today, "no, you can have this confidence, that if you asked anything according to His will, He hears you." Say, the reason, what's the reason why? Why would we have this certainty, why would we have this confidence? Well, the keyword is the word "and", okay.

When you read the Bible, it's very important to look at what's before, what's after the passage you are reading and when we look at the word "and" it connects with what goes on before. So let me show you what goes on before

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the
Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

(1 John 5:13 ESV)

and this is the confidence.

So what John is saying here, is this: When you believe in the name of the Son of God, you can know you have eternal life and you can have confidence your God hears you. Why? Because you have believed in the name of the Son of God. What John is saying is, when you have Jesus in your life, when He is your Savior, when you have received this Zoe, this eternal life from Him, God hears your prayers. It's not because of who we are, it's not because of what we have done, not because we have been good boys, good girls, we have been super obedient, we have worked our way, so that God now has to hear us. None of that - God hears us because of Jesus, and because of Jesus alone.

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That's why in the Bible it's regularly told to us that we should pray in His Name, in other words, on His behalf and on His merits, not ours. So because of Jesus Christ, we have tremendous confidence in prayer, we are saved because of his grace. This is what the Bible teaches, Ephesians chapter 3 tells us

..... Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

(Ephesians 3:11-12 ESV)

that Christ Jesus our Lord is the reason why we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in Him. No mortal man would dare stand before the throne, remember that song. It's only by Your blood, it's only by Your mercy, and it's because of Jesus alone that you and I can pray, and know that God will hear our prayers. Not just some random words we shoot up, hoping some deity would catch what we say - no, we have certainty because Jesus died for us.

This is a picture of the Golden Bridge in San Francisco. Many years ago, while it was being constructed, it was notorious for having many of the workers fall off and die. In fact, it was said that twenty-three people fell from this bridge during its construction phase to their death and the contractors, the architects, the engineers decided they had to do something about it. So they laid a safety net beneath this bridge and this net was really useful, because ten other people fell after that, but they were saved by the net, their lives were preserved. But what was even more amazing is not the saving of lives, but after net was built up, the construction of this bridge went more efficiently by 25%. So, there is something we learned there, that when the workers were safe, they knew their safety and their security, they were able to devote themselves to the work.

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This is exactly what someone quotes or says,

'Presumption & doubt put the sinner to sleep,
but faith & assurance animate the believer
to greater godliness - not least, the exercise of prayer'

The reason why you and I can really give ourselves to prayer is because we know God hears us and the reason why we know our God hears us, is because of Jesus Christ our Lord.

And this is the confidence that we have toward him,
that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.
And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask,
we know that we have the requests
that we have asked of him.

(1 John 5:14-15 ESV)

And this is the confidence. So this morning I want to say, for all of us who are believers of Jesus, you are followers of Jesus, don't pray with doubt, don't pray with thinking, "will God really hear me, I messed up yesterday, I sinned yesterday, I really did something wrong..." Yes, you did something wrong yesterday, but you know something, you come to Jesus Christ not because you lived a perfect life. You come to Jesus Christ because He lived a perfect life, and through Him, you have confidence and access and you can come and ask God for cleansing, you can ask God for His blessings, come and adore Him. This is our confidence.

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But some of us, would say, "wow, that sounds good, so does it mean then that if I pray in Jesus name, I am a believer, I can ask anything I want, and God will hear me and do what I say and follow my bidding?" Well, no, because John is careful to add, second thing, and there is a condition to prayer, not just a confidence, but a condition to prayer when he says

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if you ask anything according to His will. If you are a parent, you will know how important this is, okay. If your child asked you to do anything, do you really do anything for your child? No, of course not, because what he asked for may not be

what is best for him. My son says to me, I want to drive. Does it mean I let him drive? My, my young one, 2 1/2 years old, always climb to the front of the car and, "I want to drive, I want to drive, I want to drive." Do I say, okay, son, you drive, I'd answer your prayer, I'd answer your request. Do I, do I, say that? No! I would be a terrible parent! "Mummy, I don't want to do homework anymore, I want to play." "Okay, okay, you play." Is that good parenting? "I want to eat candies, I don't want to eat rice, I don't, I don't want to eat broccoli and carrots." Is that good parenting, if we always give in to what our child wants? Of course not: They may abuse it, they do not know what is good for them.

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So the prayer life of a Christian is not saying, "God, you must do what I want." "God, do what is in Your will, because Your will is always the best. "

Someone said this, a Danish proverb.

"Give to a pig when it grunts and a child when he cries,
and you will have a fine pig and a bad child."

A Danish Proverb

Now, God is not in the business of raising spoilt Christians who gets what he wants and ruins himself. Our Father is far wiser than that, He wants the best for us and therefore it's always going to be according to His will, that's the best.

You know, when Jesus was asked, "teach us how to pray," one of the key phrases He said is, "This is how you pray, 'Thy will be done'". He didn't say, "Lord, I pray my will be done." No, He says, "Lord, I pray Thy will be done." So often we ask for God to do "my will." Prayer is aligning ourselves to His will. See, this is the approach we have to prayer, we think that God is like the genie in the bottle, genie in the lamp dup, dup, dup, dup (pastor makes a rubbing motion) and he comes out and he will say, "dear master, what are the three things you want me to do for you?" No, that's not God.

Prayer is getting God's will done on earth. I'll quote this to you.

Prayer is a mighty instrument,
not for getting man's will done in heaven,
but for getting God's will done on earth

Prayer is a mighty instrument, not for getting man's will done in heaven - that will be tragic, that will be scary, that will be absolutely terrible for us - but it is getting God's will done on earth. That is absolutely assuring because we know He works all things together for good to them that love God. We know that He is always working for His greater glory. So prayer, rightly understood, must be done according to His will.

How is your prayer life? Do you pray for His will or your will? If I may kick it up a notch or two, if you really want to pray and you really want to have effective, powerful prayer lives, it's not just to have that confidence and, and that you pray in His will. You must also live in His will. So don't just pray His will, but live His will. You say, where do you get that? I get that, just to bring you back some time ago, in 1John 3:22. Remember this? John has been teaching on prayer and he reminded us, he told us in 1John 3:22

and whatever we ask we receive from him,
because we keep his commandments
and do what pleases him.

(1 John 3:22 ESV)

whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do what pleases Him. I tell you something about prayer life: It really causes you to reflect upon yourself, if you understand God's Word. You will not live a careless life and say, "aiyah, doesn't matter. God is gracious, I will pray to Him today and He will do what I want Him to do." No, you will search your heart. I am praying to God, and He tells me that one of the hindrances to prayer is when I disobey. Now, it doesn't mean that He doesn't love you, it doesn't mean that you are kicked out of heaven, it doesn't mean that He is no more your Savior. No, you are always secure in grace, but it does mean that when you do not listen to God, you do not want to obey Him, He doesn't answer you.

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When my child is naughty, when Shawn or Mattias is naughty, they do not come to daddy and say, "daddy, can I have ice cream?" They quietly hide somewhere else. Now, they don't doubt that father and mommy still love them, they don't doubt, they are still my sons, nothing changes, but because they are disobedient, they know they will not have their requests, they are still naughty, they have to learn, not that I hate them, but I want them to learn. So God here tells us that for prayer to be heard, you must live His will, be obedient.

This is not unique to John. In Psalm 66, it's the same

If I had cherished iniquity in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened.

(Psalm 66:18 ESV)

if I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. Similarly, husbands, I tell you something about yourself. If you don't do this properly, you also have your prayers answered and its 1Peter 3

Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

(1 Peter 3:7 ESV)

husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that, what? Your prayers may not be hindered. You know why your prayers are always not answered? (Laughter in the congregation) maybe one of the reasons is here, always quarreling and arguing, and not treating your wife with honor. I mean, this is as plain as daylight. So, Peter says, "hey, come on, be nice to your wife, show honor to her, take care of her." Why? So that your prayers will not be hindered. Now, so all the wives very happy today aah. (Laughter in the congregation) super happy aah, I think it will work the other way too, alright - if wives, you are angry with your spouse or your spouse is angry because of you, your prayers will also be hindered. And I think there's good grounds for that in Matthew 5:24 and Jesus is here saying,

leave your gift there before the altar and go.

First be reconciled to your brother,
and then come and offer your gift.

(Matthew 5:24 ESV)

if you know you have offended someone, he is angry with you, Jesus says don't worship first, leave your gift at the altar, stop what you're doing, even worship. First be reconciled to your brother, and then you come and worship. So when you start praying and you know that you have offended someone, it really causes you to stop

and consider, maybe the first thing I should ask God for is grace to go back to the person and say, "I'm sorry," because these things hinder prayer. You're not living in God's will, you see.

What about this, this is interesting as I study it.

Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor
will himself call out and not be answered.

(Proverbs 21:13 ESV)

whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered. Stinginess hinders prayer, generosity encourages prayer. And this is what RA Torrey said about George Mueller. George Mueller is a great man of prayer, of faith, and I think many of you must have heard of his name. And Torrey has a very interesting observation where he says

"George Mueller ... was a mighty man of prayer because he was a mighty giver. What he received from God never stuck to his fingers; he immediately passed it on to others. He was constantly receiving because he was constantly giving."

Mueller was a great or mighty man of prayer. Why? We would have thought, because he studies the Bible, because he lives by faith. But he says, he's a mighty man of prayer because he was a mighty giver. What he received from God never stuck to his fingers; he immediately passed it on to others. He was constantly receiving because he was constantly giving. Wow, it is said that Mueller started several orphanages and in his lifetime he managed by faith to reach receive some 8 million pounds. Now, that's a lot of money, 8 million pounds today is a lot already, 8 million pounds during his time is amazing, and when he died, it is said that his entire estate to his name was eight hundred dollars.

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Here's a man of prayer, because he was a man who gave. So he reminded of what Jesus had to say,

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you,
ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

(John 15:7 ESV)

if you abide in me and my words abide in you, this is about obedience - ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. Simple words, the teaching of Jesus Christ with regards to our prayer life.

So I want to come back to 1John 5. I am saying when we ask, we need to ask according to His will, but don't just limit it to asking in His will, but be sure your life is also in His will, it is very important. But coming back to our text 1John 5:14, we must ask according to His will.

The question for us this morning is, can you really know God's will? Can you really know God's will for every circumstance of your life? Think about it, and I want you to answer, alright, with show of hands. During the first service, I had amazing answers, so I want to hear from you, alright, just yes or no, that's all. Can we really know God's will for every circumstance of life? How many of you say "yes, I can know God's will for every circumstance of life," can I see by a show of hands? One, that's why I told you, it was amazing, two, anyone else? Three, four, we can know God's will for every circumstance, five anyone else, six okay.

How many of you feel that we cannot know God's will for every circumstance of life? A bit more, and the rest are cowards. (Laughter in the congregation) okay, well I say this is a difficult question to answer, because I think any one of you who raised your hand today, you're right. Those who never raised your hand... Huh, huh... Now, let me say why both are right. We can always know God's will for every circumstance of life - in a sense, we can know God's general revealed will. For example, if someone agitates me, is it God's will for me to retaliate? No.

There are principles in the Bible that are crystal-clear for me to know what I am and what I am not supposed to do. So in that sense I can know, it's all in the Bible. On the other hand, there are very specific things that I don't really know. For example, should I take up this job tomorrow, will I be married next year, would I buy this property, or would I go to Africa. You don't really know these things, you don't really know everything there is to know about your life.

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So in a sense, yes, I can know God's will as far as the Bible tells us, but no, I cannot really know God's will for every circumstance of my life. And this is not from me, this is what the Bible says.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness.
For we do not know what to pray for as we ought,
but the Spirit himself intercedes for us
with groanings too deep for words.

(Romans 8:26 ESV)

Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. What's your weakness? Can't keep your eyes open? Yah, that's one. But, another area of our weakness is that we do not know what to pray for as we ought. You don't really know what you should pray for. Let's say, you are sick, is it really God's will to heal every sickness? I can tell you something, no, because that's why some people die. Right? I mean, if it is His will to heal every sickness then nobody dies.

But clearly it is His will revealed for us to pray for healing, but at the very same time, He has a secret will that means some die, many die, all die eventually. So we have to admit this weakness in all of us, we are not God, we don't know everything. And therefore it seems very difficult for us to, say, Lord, you tell us to pray according to Your will, but at the very same time, we do not know what we should pray for as we ought.

Now, we do have the help of the Holy Spirit. And if you remember our series in Romans, it is about the Holy Spirit taking our very flawed, inadequate prayers and perfecting it. That's what the Holy Spirit does for us when we pray. That's amazing. That's a sermon for another time. But I want to say that when we pray we must never have that arrogance to say, "aah, I know what I should pray for and definitely this would take place."

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A story is told of George Whitfield. George Whitfield is one of the spiritual giants that brought about spiritual revival and an awakening in England and his son was born. And when his son was born, George had such a great conviction and belief that his son will be a great preacher one day, for God. And so he named his son, John after John the Baptist. And not only did he name him John the Baptist, he actually held a service and preached to lots of people, saying, "this is what God spoke to me, John will be a great preacher."

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Now, every parent, I can understand you have high hopes, dreams and desires for your kids, but he really believed that it is God who said to him, "John will be a great preacher." Sadly, when the son was just four months old, he died from seizures. Of course George and his wife was severely devastated, but after that sorrow, there was a conviction that came to his heart. He was sorry, he was sorry to God for equating his own feelings and emotions and thinking as the Word of God.

This is what Keller says about that story.

The lesson here is not that God never guides our thoughts or prompts us to choose wise courses of action, but that we cannot be sure he is speaking to us unless we read it in the Scripture.

It is therefore terrifying for us to hear preachers, pastors, Christians, say "oh, oh, oh God spoke to me..." And they give you prophecy. Say, this is what God... But many a times, it doesn't turn out that way, and what happens is that you go the way of George Whitfield, equating our own feelings as the authoritative Word of God. That's dangerous. Now, I'm not saying, as Keller saying here, that God never guides us. He does, but there must be that understanding and humility that we might confuse what we hear, to think that it is from God when it really is from ourselves.

For all you know what you hear, may be from your stomach (pastor makes rumbling sound). I don't know, it's... How do you know? Well, the only way I really know is from the Scripture. So, in the light of this, can we have good practices to encourage more centered prayer? In other words, prayers that are more in accordance to His will? There will never be a 100% hit rate because Romans 8:26 tells you, that's our weakness: We do not know what we should pray for as we ought. But certainly there are better ways to pray than what we have been praying today. I want to share with you, just, two very simple practical recommendations from giants of the faith who have practiced prayer effectively in their lives.

Eugene Peterson talks about the

"overwhelming preciousness of God's speech to our prayers."

The first thing I want to say to you, if you really want to pray effectively: Pray the Scriptures. Immerse yourself in the Word of God, and let the Word direct and dictate your prayer. Not so much let your own desires, your own circumstances be the primary motivation of your prayer. Let God's Word lead you - the overwhelming

preciousness of God's speech. As you hear what He says in the Bible, respond to Him in prayer. That's true prayer. See, again, Keller

"In the bible, we can hear God speaking to us and we respond in prayer. Prayer becomes answering God. In all cases God is the initiator, hearing always precedes asking."

"In the Bible," he says, "we can hear God speaking to us and we respond in prayer." God speaks, we respond. Prayer then becomes answering God. In all cases, God is the initiator, hearing always precedes asking.

"We should listen, study, think, reflect, and ponder the scriptures until there is an answering response in our hearts and minds. That response to God's speech is then truly prayer and should be given to God."

We should listen, we should study, we should think, we should reflect and ponder the Scriptures until there is an answering response in our hearts and minds. That response to God's speech is then truly prayer, and should be given to God. You know, I've always wondered why we do worship the way we do, "worship" meaning worship service. I don't know whether you'll agree with me, but I realize that we generally sing with greater gusto and conviction after the sermon, than before the sermon. Do you agree with me? Before the sermon, you errgh... You are not very clued in, but maybe after the preaching of God's Word, after you hear what God has to say, there arises in you a desire to respond to Him. That's why we sing better, with conviction - that's what I mean. Maybe the reason why you sing better is because during the sermon, you've slept enough (shows him losing balance) (Laughter in the congregation) I hope not. I hope that it is because the Word of God so stirs in you that you say, I want to praise Him, I want to respond to Him.

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So it's strange to me. Actually Christendom, throughout the world, sings many, many songs in the beginning, then you sing one song at the end. I've always thought, why don't we reverse it, have one or two songs, call to worship, hear His Word and then we sing! We praise, we respond, we honor Him. I thought that should be the way, because that's the way you should have your daily devotions or your time with God.

You don't start your devotions waking up in the morning and say "ah, I think I have a back ache, okay, let's pray. God, please heal my back ache, and I have a long day at work and thank You very much, Amen." What kind of a communion is that? It's all

your agenda. How different it will be, if you begin the day reading His Word, seeing His glory, appreciating what He has done in Jesus Christ and then it is almost natural and spontaneous that out of the reflection of His Word, you would praise and adore and repent and ask. You don't ask for small things that do not really bring Him glory, that is all about yourself, but because you have read of what He has done and who He is, you pray prayers that really lift up His name. And you can really say, "Lord, Thy will be done," because you see it in the Bible.

Time stamp in audio 0:29:34.3.

Again, Torrey says this about Mueller,

"George Mueller, one of the mightiest men of prayer of the present generation, when the hour for prayer came would begin by reading and meditating upon God's Word until out of the study of the Word a prayer began to form itself in his heart."

RA Torrey

George Mueller, one of the mightiest men of prayer of the present generation, when the hour for prayer came he would begin by reading and meditating upon God's Word until out of the study of the Word, a prayer began to form itself in his heart.

Same principle, folks. You don't rush.. No, I am not saying that when you when you are journeying in life a problem arises, someone scolds you, you say, "Lord, help me to control...", that's wrong. No, I am not saying that. That's perfectly fine. But if your entire prayer life is always a kind of reaction to circumstance, and not because you been soaking and immersing yourself in Scripture, you will not pray the kind of prayer that we are reading about here.

It lacks depth, it lacks theological roots, it lacks a certain variety, it's always going to be "God give me, God give me, God give me, God give me," isn't it? It lacks the prayer breadth that you see in the book of Psalms. So, when you read Psalms, God shows you Himself, so you respond to Him accordingly. That, I think, is true prayer, praying according to His will.

So, number one. Immerse yourself in Scripture. Let, let Eugene Peterson's words remind you of the overwhelming preciousness of God speech to our prayers.

But secondly, JI Packer says there's something called

The theological reasoning in prayer.

Now, JI Packer is a wonderful theologian and he teaches about this, thing called, theolo... It sounds very chim (colloquial for deep) sounds very complex but it really is quite simple. You know how it is when you pray, we generally draw up a shopping list. Do you have a shopping list? My helper always gives me a shopping list, err there are the things to buy, 1,2,3,4,5 and I looked, and when I shop I bring my phone around and the photos, what detergent photos are here, so I go to shopping with a shopping list mentality - just go hunt, get, put in a basket, check out. Is that your prayer life too? "These are the ten things I have in my life, God. I got I got exam today, tomorrow, I got this work project, I need to look for a wife (Laughter in the congregation) I, I'm not feeling well, I got a back pain. Okay, these are the ten things. Dear God, thank you for today, I can pray to you, and number one I want to pray..." Is that how you pray? Maybe. Not in the exact words, but maybe that's the way we pray.

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The problem with that is it becomes unsure if what you pray for is really God's will, isn't it? I mean, it's just what you want. Packer is saying, don't just say what you want, but reason with God. In actual fact, he uses a very strong word: Argue with God. He says, present those biblical reasons, why you think what you pray for is God's will. "God, heal me. Why? Because in this healing, you will be glorified. But if you see fit that I should not be healed, like apostle Paul, still, glorify Yourself." Reason, help yourself, so that at the end of this prayer life, you would know whether this prayer is really God's will that you should continue, or you realize that there are no theological moorings and you should really let it go.

Delight yourself in the Lord - that's key, that's key - and He will give you the desires of your heart. Delight yourself in His Word and His will.

So this is a short phrase but really, in actual fact, to practise it, it is not easy. But I say to you, in summary, back to immersing yourself in Scripture and then expressing yourself with Scripture. It really is as simple as that. Overwhelming preciousness of God's speech to our prayers.

But lastly, I want you to note the consequence when we pray. The consequence here is

And this is the confidence that we have toward him,
that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.
And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask,
we know that we have the requests
that we have asked of him.

(1 John 5:14-15 ESV)

we know that we have the requests that we have asked of Him. Now, as you realize your standing in Jesus, as you say, "Lord, I want to live in Your will, I want to pray Your will, as revealed in the Scriptures, I can have this understanding of this consequence," we know that we have the requests that we have asked of Him. I want you to note here a key phrase that you shouldn't miss is the word "we," or the words, "we know that." It's very different, this whole sentence will be very different if you take away "we know that".

"And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we have the request we have asked of Him" - now that becomes scary. In other words, the very moment I pray, I expect an answer straight away, that I can see. John is saying, no, no, no you may not see it, okay. When you pray right now, God hears you right now, but you may not see the answer right now, but you can know that, because the answer can come later. It is already answered, but the delivery is later, the timing is later, or the form can be different, but you can know He has heard and He has answered.

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Some weeks ago, WhatsApp came up with something new, that shook those, the world of those who use WhatsApp. Do you realize that WhatsApp there are ticks, when you deliver your messages, you all know, I didn't know actually. (Laughter in the congregation) See mi lai eh (colloquial for "what does it mean") tick, I never quite understood what the ticks were and I realized the ticks meant this, one tick means, your message is sent. Sometimes, your Internet no good, cannot send, no tick ah, so it is stuck there, you know that. Number two, if you have two ticks, it means not only is it sent, they have received it. But they may not have opened it yet, you know you sent a message never open, you can't read lah. The third one, this time, the new addition, is the tick, from grey, becomes blue, wah very clever.

It means that not only is it received, but it is now read, by the recipient. And then they add "and ignored." So now I understand when I send you a WhatsApp, I wait, lah is blue and no answer, it means you ignore already lah or you are still thinking.

But there is this process in WhatsApp because sending and receiving and answering takes time by people, and you're not always sure whether they got it, you are not always sure whether they answer it.

I tell you something about God's WhatsApp system, okay God's email system, or God's, "knee-mail" system, no lag-time, the moment you ask, the moment you ask, the moment you pray, we can know that we have - present tense - the request that we have asked of Him, no lag-time for God. He doesn't say, oh, sorry Wi-Fi not good ah, the heaven's throne is very far, takes a few days for you to reach God. No, immediate. In fact, let me tell you something: The Bible says God knows what you want to pray for, even before you open your mouth. This is the tremendous comfort and assurance God gives to you, who are God's children, in prayer. In Jesus, in His will, you know it's, you know that it is answered, there and then.

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Now, Like I said, the answer is given, but it may take some time to be delivered. For example, in Daniel 10, Daniel was wondering why did it take so long, why are we not going back to Jerusalem, so he began to fast and pray and Michael the Archangel or the Angel came and said to Daniel:

Then he said to me, "Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia,

(Daniel 10:12-13 ESV)

from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humble yourself before your God, your words have been heard and I have come.

So right on Day One, the moment you pray, it's already heard. The answer is already sent. But in God's infinite wisdom, God decides that it will be twenty-one days later before Daniel, you, know about this. Now, of course, the reason is that there was a spiritual battle, but of course, behind that spiritual battle is God's plan and timing. So you may have been praying for something for a long while, it might have taken twenty-one weeks, twenty-one months, twenty-one years, but the very first day you pray, God did not ignore. You know, sometimes you send email, people ignore, you send SMS people ignore. God doesn't ignore. You are His child. He is not forgetful,

He is not hard of hearing, He's God. So, why is the answer not here yet? Well, he has already answered, just that the timing is not your timing. His ways are better than your ways, His thoughts are higher than your thoughts. Now, not only is it difficult for us to discern that God's answers to prayer are given because of timing, it is also difficult because sometimes the way He gives you the answer is different from what you asked for.

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For example Abraham says, "Lord, I think it's time for us to have a child through whom You will bless the multitudes, the nations. But looking at Sarah and I, we're both lao kock kock (colloquial for "very old"), I don't think we can make it anymore and so, Lord, let Ishmael be the one. Let Ishmael, the son whom I have with Hagar, be the one." You know what is God's answer to Abraham? "I have answered you, Abraham, but my answer is no. It will still be a child from Sarah. It will be Isaac, the child of promise." Did God answer? Yes, absolutely. In a way according to what Abraham wanted? No, but it's far better. It's far better, that it will be via Isaac.

How about Moses? Moses says, "Lord, let me go into the promised land." God answered him, and said, "no, it will not be you, Moses. It will be Joshua, a younger guy who will be ready for the conquest in Canaan." David says, "Lord I want to build you a house," and God says, "no, it will not be you David, it will be Solomon, your son." How about that demoniac, the demoniac who was healed by Jesus. He says, "Jesus, I want to follow you," Jesus says, "no, I hear you, but I have a better plan for you, go back to Decapolis, go back to your city, go back to hometown and tell them who I am and what I've done, be the evangelist, that's a better plan for you." Apostle Paul says, "Lord, would you remove this thorn in my flesh, it's much better for me." God says, "no, that's not better for you. What's better for you is that you have the thorn remain in the flesh, because that keeps you humble. That keeps My power coursing through your life. That's better for you, Paul, I have answered you."

So my friends, God answers us all the time, just that it's not always in our time, and not in the form we expect, and this is what we can know.

I think one of the most vivid illustrations to this church will be our venture of faith in getting Punggol land, isn't it? I mean, this is was a devastating notice, you have not been successful. This was in March, about two years ago. As many of you know, we went for the bid for the land just near the Punggol MRT station and the truth be told, I was pretty confident we will get it. I mean, I, I thought the Lord has been leading

our church, I thought that we would be appropriate to serve the demography represented in Punggol and in His plan, it probably prepares us for that. I thought we put in a very, very strong bid of 19 million. I mean, it is I'm so thankful we didn't, but we were so... It was such a strong bid!

And so on the day when at 5:15 - I was refreshing my phone, and seeing whether we got it, and Pastor Kay Hong sent, "we did not get it." I say, "are you kidding? It cannot be." And then he wrote, "the Titular archbishop of the Roman Catholic Church of Singapore..." Oh, this cannot be from Kay Hong, must be something chim (colloquial for deep) and I, I it began to dawn on me: No, the answer is no. I was very sure, but I know not what I should pray for as I ought, isn't it. And it was an answer that I never expected. We never expected.

But people realized this. "Hi Pastor Jason we rejoice in the Lord for He makes no mistakes. God knows best." (Laughter in the congregation) why you all laugh, aah. Because of the second line (we can buy a hotel instead)?

The second line of the message says on the screen, Perhaps He wants us to buy a hotel instead!. Praising God for the experience. God bless.

Well, when I look at this phrase, if you're not a believer of God, you don't believe the Bible, you could easily say, "aiyah, this one is self, self-consolation." For those who are Chinese, you are familiar with (pastor quotes title of the book "The True Story of Ah Q" in Chinese). If you are not familiar, you go and Wikipedia it, very hard to explain. (Ah Q's mentality would be) "don't have, say, God will, aiyah God knows best," this kind of a, this kind of spirit and attitude. That's just psychology, psychological thinking. No, I tell you, this is not psychological thinking, this is theological thinking. This is faith, that when God says "no," we are, we are comforted with the reality He knows best.

Remember the sermon? No one in first service remembered the tagline alright, "When God says no, He really wants you to know..." See, nobody remembers right? "When God says no, He really wants you to know..." (Murmuring in the congregation) You must have been in the sermon then to remember it, otherwise you wouldn't. "He really wants you to know that He still loves you so."

That passage was taken from how God said no to David. David says, "I want to build You a temple, a house." God says "no, but David, let me tell you something: I appreciate what you want in your heart to build a temple for Me. Your son will take over, you just prepare for him, but David, I want you to know, I will build a kingdom

in your name." Wow, its overwhelming, sometimes we always think, wah, I'll do some great things for God... I tell you something, God is far more concerned He will do some great things for you.

And when we got this answer of "no," we thank God for His Word that anchors our faith and we realized God's no is not a rejection, it's a redirection. Not that He rejected you, not that He hates you, no, it's a redirection to something even better. Oh, the most famous statement in the, in the church alright, don't forget this statement, the best English you can find in town. (Laughter in the congregation) God's good is gooder than our good, unforgettable Queen's English.

But it is true. It's very hard to believe when you are personally going through trials, when you are going through cancer treatment, when your wife is leaving you, when your home is breaking up. But somehow, in an amazing way, when you look back, you will say, God's good is gooder than our good.

I mean, today when I look back at our Punggol journey, it's an amazing thing, it's crazy, I mean, it's unbelievable. On March 12, no one would have expected anything like this to happen, but hindsight tells us God's sight. And maybe in your life, as you go through the trials today, it is very hard for you to believe this, but you can know that when you pray according to His will, you have the requests that you have asked of Him.

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It is said that God will give us what we ask or give us what we would have asked, if we knew everything He knew. The reality is we don't know all the things He knows. That's why, we always think our will is the best. But when you know everything God knows, you would gladly say, "Thy will be done," and you can have this confidence, you have this request that you have asked of Him.

So, dear church, I want to encourage you in this new year again. Prayer is such an undeveloped, underdeveloped spiritual discipline in your life, isn't it? Because, maybe, you are scared of praying, maybe you have been disappointed and discouraged in praying. I have been praying, so many times, but never answer. I tell you something, the theological answer is, He has answered, wait for the time, be alert and be open and be honestly submissive to Him that if He gives it to you in another form you are glad because He knows the best. And I pray for all of you today, who do not know Jesus, this is one prayer request you should make: You should ask God to change your heart and to know Him as your Savior. My friends, this is the God we

worship, a faithful God who answers the prayers of His children because He does love us.

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Let's bow for a word of prayer together. Now, I'd like you at this time to reflect and to think about your very own prayer life, to reflect and to think even in your own journey of life today. Are you going through trials, are you going through tribulations? And you have been trying to grit your teeth and pull through by yourself? There really is no need to, when you can come to God in prayer. Maybe you feel you are unworthy, you feel you have messed it all up. I tell you something, Jesus is worthy and as you come in Jesus' Name, as you come in His grace, our Father hears you.

Maybe it's time for us this morning to say "Lord, help me to get back on my knees, help me to meet with You, help me to trust You in prayer." If God has given us His Son, how will He not, with Him, also freely give us all things, how will He not answer your prayers when it is the best for you? Well, when we don't ask, we will not have, we have not because we asked not. So this morning, would you pray... Our journey to the eternal life, our journey into the future, is never going to be an easy one, but you are not without help because you have the prayer-answering God. So, would you this morning endeavour to walk and move forward on your knees? Would you ask God for a fresh approach to prayer, that it will not be self-centered, it will not originate with your very own puny life, but it will start with the splendor of God in the Scriptures and as you look at God in the Bible, praise arises, adoration comes forth. And you know, as you look at God in the Bible, the problems of your life melt away as you seek Him in prayer. What a joy it is to encounter God in prayer. And I say, your church will move forward if you pray. I say your family will move forward if you pray. I say your life will move forward when you pray. Sinful strongholds will be torn down when you pray, breakthroughs will arise when you pray, because you have a God who answers prayer. You don't have to be like those religionists who throw mud at their idols. I know my prayers stick, my prayers are answered, my prayers are heard because of Jesus Christ.

So why don't we go to prayer more? Why don't we say, "O Lord, I need you"? God delights to hear that from you. He says, "my son, my child, come and call unto Me, and I'll show you great and mighty things that you know not of." Ask and it shall be given, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you, ask anything you wish, and it shall be done, as we delight ourselves in Him. So Father, we thank

You this morning, even now, as we pray we know You hear us, and we know You answer us. Deepen our prayer lives, strengthen our communion with You, make our prayer life rich and grand and glorious because You are grand and glorious. We do pray that we would be a people who will regularly pray in the center of Your will as we go through the Scriptures, that in this pilgrimage of life, we have learned to call out to our prayer-answering God.

Lord, once again I pray for all our guests who are here, may they today humbly call out to You to save them from their sin, may they humbly call out to You that You would change their lives, You will help them believe in Jesus, Your Son. Our prayer this morning is that all of us will be drawn nearer to Jesus today, we pray all these now in His precious name, Amen.