

BACK TO BASICS

18. PUT THE KEY IN TO OPEN THE DOOR

Dr. James Gilmour, a long time missionary to Mongolia, was once asked to treat some wounded soldiers. Although he was not a Doctor he did have some knowledge of first aid, and knew he could not refuse the request. He dressed the wounds of two men, but a third man had a badly broken thigh bone. The missionary had no idea what to do for such an injury, the only thing he knew to do was pray. So, kneeling beside the man, he asked the Lord for help. *He didn't know how the Lord would answer his prayer, but he just believed that the need would be supplied.* He looked but he could find no books on physiology, in the primitive hospital, and no doctor had yet arrived. To complicate matters, a crowd of beggars came to ask for money. He was deeply concerned for his patient, yet his heart went out to these beggars. Quickly he gave them some money, some words of encouragement and then turned away. A moment later, he stared in amazement at one beggar who had remained behind. ***The half starved beggar was little more than a living skeleton.***

The missionary at this moment realised that God had answered his prayer, and had brought him a walking lesson in anatomy. He asked the elderly man if he could examine him. He agreed and by carefully tracking the femur bone with his fingers, in order to learn how to treat the soldiers broken leg, James Gilmour was able to return to his patient and set the fracture. Gilmour later testified how God had provided him with a strange, yet sufficient answer to his prayer. *Once again, he was reminded that in order to get an answer to prayer, one must simply pray !* One of the most important subjects in the Christian life is prayer. And as the apostle John comes to the conclusion of his book he gathers together some of the themes he has already dealt with and in (5:14-15) he deals with prayer. *Would you agree with me when I say that prayer can be a tough assignment at the best of times.* It is something many of us struggle with. There always seems to be so many other pressures encroaching on our time so that prayer is something we often do on the hoof, and even when we do get down to it, we are never quite sure how to go about it.

Yet God never does anything apart from prayer. If you have been ill recently and are now restored, its because someone prayed for you. If you have been lost, but now you are saved its because someone prayed for you ! My ***prayer is the key to all that God does !*** R.A. Torrey said, “ *prayer is the key that unlocks all the storehouses of God's infinite grace and power, all that God is, and all that God has, is at the disposal of prayer. But we must use the key. Prayer can do anything that God can do and since God can do anything prayer is omnipotent.*” You see, the key to getting God to work is prayer, but what is the key to getting prayer to

work ? The golden key to prayer is praying in the will of God. It is making sure that what you ask from God is exactly what God wants to give and what God wants to do. So I want to talk to you this on the subject, “ ***Put the key in to open the Door.***” John describes for us here certain keys we must put in if we are to open this door. We must be,

(1) CONFIDENT IN OUR PRAYER

Look at (5:14) if you will ! The word “ *confidence*, ” is word that literally means “ *freedom of speech*. ” The Greeks used this word as a political term and it refers to the freedom to speak your mind in an open assembly.

When we go to the Lord in prayer we must go with confidence. We must go with the knowledge that we have the freedom to speak our hearts and minds to God. You see, when you pray, God is not concerned with how eloquent you pray, God is not concerned with how fervent you pray, God is primarily concerned with how confident you pray ! *We are to go to the Lord with confidence*. Three times previously in this book John has talked about our confident before the Lord. In (Ch 2) we can have confidence before Him and not be ashamed at His coming. In (Ch 3) we can have confidence toward God. In (Ch 4) we can have confidence or boldness in the day of judgement. Here in (Ch 5) we can have confidence as we come before the Lord in prayer. We must be confident that we have access to God, we must be confident that we have an audience with God, we must be confident that we will get an answer from God. My God wants to answer your prayers ! You don't have to pester God, you don't have to twist His arm, you don't have to bribe the Lord, for God wants to answer your prayer ! George Mueller said, “ *Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance, it is laying hold of His willingness.* ” I am to be confident, bold, courageous when I pray to the God in heaven. But why should I be so bold and confident ? I am but a peck of dust on this earth going before the Creator of the Universe.

I tell you, if I were summoned to Buckingham Palace today, I would not be very confident. In fact I would be rather nervous and intimidated. But we are told here that we are to go to the Lord confidently, free to speak our heart, expecting God to hear. Now why should we be so confident ? Because of,

(a) *THE POSITION WE OCCUPY:*

Do you see what John says ? “ *And this is the confidence that we have in Him,* ” (5:14) Now who is the “ *we*, ” he refers to ? Well, notice (5:13) It is the people who believe on the name of the Son of God and who are they ? They are the children of God, because the opening verse says, “ *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.* ” (5:1) My the first reason we ought to be confident is because we are the children of God. Whenever you pray, wherever you pray, for whatever you pray, you are not speaking as a citizen to a Prime Minister, nor are you speaking as a subject to a King, nor are you speaking as a slave to a Master, but when you pray you are speaking as a son to a Father. I imagine the early disciples felt much the same about prayer as we often do. It

never ceases to amaze me that they did not come to the Lord Jesus and ask Him, “*Lord teach us to preach,*” or “*Lord teach us how to witness to our family and friends,*” or “*Lord teach us to work miracles.*” No, they came to Christ and said, “*Lord, teach us to pray.*” (Lk 11:1)

Do you know the very first thing Christ taught them ? “*And He said unto them, when ye pray say, our Father which art in heaven.*” (Lk 13:2) Paul in (Eph 3:14) said, “*For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Peter in the opening chapter of his 1st epistle says, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” (1 Pet 1:3) My we are to talk to the Lord as a child talks to his father. This is the basis of all real prayer. Prayer is based on the relationship of a child to a Father. Here’s why we can be confident because of (a)

(b) *THE PRIVILEGE WE ENJOY:*

Look if you will at (5:14) “*In Him.*” Literally “*beside or with Him.*” To be placed in a very near proximity to. You see, when you pray you are immediately transported from this earth and placed at the feet of the Lord. Someone has said that “*prayer is whispering in the ear of God.*” For when you take time to pray the Lord takes time to listen. *He listens attentively, sincerely, compassionately !* The Lord wants to know what is on your heart. As Joseph Scriven says, “*What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer.*” How many of you think that if I were to call the Prime Minister he would answer the phone and talk to me ? How many of you believe that if I write to the Prime Minister he will actually read my letter ? But I want you to know the moment I look up to heaven and say “*Heavenly Father,*” the Lord looks at me and says, “*Son you have my undivided attention.*” By the way did you notice that our confidence is to be placed in God, not in prayer.

“*And this is the confidence we have in or before Him.*”

Not before prayer ! You see, we are to pray in faith but our faith is never to be placed in prayer, faith is to be placed in a person, the Lord Jesus Christ. You are not told in the Word of God to pray in the name of prayer but you are told to pray in the name of Jesus. (Jn 16:23)

When you pray do not concentrate on what you are asking for, concentrate on who you are praying to. Mack Taylor says, “*when you bring a request before God do not gaze at the request and glance at God. But glance at the request but gaze upon God. Do not be so preoccupied with what you want to say that you forget the One whom you are saying it to.*” (a) (b)

(c) *THE PERSON WE APPROACH:*

“*And this is the confidence that we have in or before Him,*” (4:14) Do you recall those words in the book of Hebrews ? “*For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points*

tempted like as we are yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (4:15-16) Whenever you come to the word “ *therefore,*” in Scripture always ask what its there for.

What’s to be the ground and basis of our confident praying before God ? Well, what is the function of a priest ? ***A prophet was one who represented God to the people, but a priest was one who represented the people to God !*** A priest makes intercession for His people ! My when we are talking to God the Father we are being prayed for by God the Son. As we intercede with the Father we are interceded for by the Son. Listen, do you not think that you can approach the throne with confidence ? Because of the (a) (b) (c) (1)

(2) COMMITTED TO HIS PLAN

“And this that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us.” Or as the Amplified Bible puts it, “ *if we ask anything according to His will, in agreement with His own plan, He hears us.*” Someone has well said “***nothing lies beyond the reach of prayer except that which lies beyond the will of God.***” The most important thing about prayer is the will of God. Now will you notice what John says. “ *If we ask anything*,” now the “ *anything,*” is contingent on the phrase “ *according to His will.*” Now to pray in the will of God requires three things. We must seek the will of God. We must know the will of God. We must do the will of God. Now if you want to “ *pray according to His will,*” you must do these things. In other words, you must,

(a) PURSUE THE WILL OF GOD:

It was Robert Law who said, “ *prayer is a mighty instrument, not for getting man’s will done in heaven, but for getting God’s will done on earth.*” My is this not the purpose of prayer ? Getting God’s will done on earth ! Therefore we must desire the will of God. Is this not what Christ desired ? Hear Him as He says, “ *My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work.*” (Jn 4:34) Watch Him in agony in the Garden of Gethsemane as He cries, “ *not My will, but Thine be done.*” (Lk 22:42) Now you may ask, “ *Oh, you mean that in my praying I am restricted to the will of God.*” My the will of God is not to limit your prayers it is to lift your prayers. For you to worry about being restricted by the will of God would be like a minnow being concerned about being hemmed in by the Atlantic Ocean. *You see, its not that God wants to gave you fewer blessings, He wants to gave you greater blessings.* God’s will may sometimes be different from your wants but it will always be better than your wants.

There used to be a preacher in Florida called Dr. Ed Solomon. He was a gifted preacher of the Word of God. Dr. Solomon got up in his own church one Sunday right there in the college town where he went to study, and some of his professors were out there in the congregation, along with his wife and he said. “ ***God never did give me anything I ever wanted.***” He said, “ *God did not let me pastor the church I always wanted to pastor.*” And the church was right there listening to

him. He said, “ *God didn’t even let me go to the College where I wanted to go, and some of his professors were sitting right there.*”

Then he said, “ *God didn’t even let me marry the woman I wanted to marry,*” and his wife was sitting right there. I tell you there was a hush over that congregation. But then he said, “ *But do you know what ? God always gave me something better than I wanted.*” My don’t be afraid of the will of God. Pursue it, seek it, ask for it with all of your heart. (a)

(b) *PERCEIVE THE WILL OF GOD:*

When you talk about the will of God, the question is always asked, but “ *how can you know the will of God ?*” Well, the Bible says it is possible to know God’s will. Do you recall how Paul prayed for the Colossian Christians ? This was his prayer “ *that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.*” (Col 1:9) Now there are two primary ways to discern the will of God.

1. The External Witness of the Scripture:

God’s will is revealed in His Word. God shows us His desires for us in His Word. Sometimes when you asking the Lord for some direction in a decision, God will bring some passage of Scripture that will relate specifically to your request. As we study the Word we allow its teachings and principles to become part of our lives so that we can discern the will of God in certain situations. Sometimes I hear folk praying, “ *Lord if be Thy will save so and so.*” Well, has God ever said that it is His will to save lost people ? He certainly has. We know we are praying in the will of God when we ask the Lord to save the lost because of (1 Tim Ch 2:4) We know we are praying in the will of God when we pray for wisdom because of (Jam Ch 1:5) We know we are praying in the will of God when we ask God to send forth labourers because of (Matt Ch 9:38) You see, you can discern the will of God as you study the Word of God. 1.

2. The Internal Witness of the Spirit:

For the Holy Spirit “ *maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*” (Rom 8:27) Somehow the Holy Spirit puts an impression on your heart. The Spirit of God takes His Word and makes it real in your life, and gives you a definite assurance and direction.

(c) *PERFORM THE WILL OF GOD:*

You see, if you are not willing to do the will of God, you will never know the will of God. The Lord Jesus said, “ *If any man shall do His will he shall know,*” (Jn 7:17) God’s will is not like a cafeteria line with a wide selection of choices. You can’t go through life and say well, “ *I’ll take this, but I won’t take that. Oh, I’d like to do that, but I don’t want to do that.*” You know, there are people who

make up their mind to do what they want to do, regardless of what God wants them to do. Then they go to the Lord and pray about it, do what they want to do, and then say God told them to do it. My if you're going to pray in the will of God, and get your prayers answered, you must be determined, right now no matter what God tells me to do, I will do it with all of my might. You must be committed to His plan ! (1) (2)

(3) COMFORTED BY HIS PROMISE

You see, when we pray in the will of God we can be sure of two things.

(a) GOD HEARS US:

“ And this is the confidence He heareth us,” (5:14) Now that is a plain statement of **His omniscience** ! The word *“ heareth,”* carries the idea not just of listening, but acting on what has been heard. Now the Lord responds to our prayers in various ways. Sometimes His response is,

1. Direct:

Do you recall Abraham' servant praying for a bride for Isaac ? The Bible says that before he was through praying God sent the answer in the person of Rebekah. (Gen 24:15)]

2. Delayed:

When Mary and Martha sent word to the Lord Jesus concerning their sick brother Lazarus, the Lord Jesus delayed His coming. (Jn 11:6) You see, God not only knows what is best, He knows when is best. One thing you can rest assured of is, the Lord is never late, He is always on time.

3. Different:

Paul prayed for healing, instead he got grace. A man made an enormous request of Napoleon and to the amazement of the entire army the request was granted. Napoleon was asked, *“ Why did you grant such a request as this ?”* Napoleon replied, *“ He honoured me by its magnitude.”*

4. A Denial:

Do you recall what the Lord said to Moses when Moses sought to enter the Promised Land ? *“ Speak no more unto Me of this matter.”* (Deut 3:26) Sometimes God simply says no. But regardless of what His response may be He will always respond to our prayers for God hears us. And then,

(b) GOD HEEDS US:

“ And if we know ... we desired of Him.” (5:15) That is a plain statement of His **omnipotence**. Its an unshakeable conviction that when we've asked anything according to the will of God we already have it whether we see it or not. The life of George Mueller abounds with instances of praying in the will of God. On one occasion he was on a ship that was fog bound off the coast of Newfoundland. It was a Wednesday night, and they were moving very slowly. Mueller went up to

the bridge and said, “ *Captain I have to be in Quebec on Saturday afternoon to preach.* ” The Captain said, “ *Sir, that’s impossible, we are not going to make it.* ” Mueller said, “ *lets go down to the chart room and pray to the Lord.* ” The Captain said, “ *are you crazy ? I can’t go the chart room right now. Do you have any idea how dense this fog is ?* ” Mueller said, “ *No, my eye is not on the density of the fog, but on the living God who controls each circumstance of my life.* ” Once they got to the chart room Mueller got down on his knees and prayed. Later the Captain said there was nothing special about Mueller’s prayer, but when he had finished praying to the Lord about lifting the fog, he said to the Captain, “ ***You don’t believe God can lift the fog I believe He already has.*** ” When they got back to the bridge the fog was gone. George Mueller prayed in the will of God and He had the request which He had asked from Him. My He is the Creator of this Universe, and He’s able to meet the need which lies heavy on your heart this !

***“ Thou art coming to a King
Large petitions with thee bring
For His grace and power are such
That none can ever ask too much.”***

The key to getting God to work is prayer, but the key to getting prayer to work is praying in the will of God. Tell me, are you Confident in your Prayer ? Are you Committed to His Plan ? If so, you’ll be Comforted By His Promise !