

In an atmosphere of love, confidence & obedience.
It is the most natural thing in the world for the
children to "ask" their father for what they need

- an atmosphere conducive to asking
VICTORY THROUGH PRAYER

- Living in confidence - wife man - city

- at Second Coming - I Jno 2

- NW: in the
sight of D-

John 5:19 = assurance in
prayer is a natural consequence
of the assured possession of
I John 3:19-24; 5:14
eternal life.

Wouldn't you now be surprised really, if God answered your prayers? If you are honest tonight, absolutely honest, and did not say what you are expected to say or what you ought to say, but said what is really on your heart, I wonder how many of us would have to confess - I would be surprised out of my mind if God answered my prayer. In the face of all the promises of God, most of us really, when we pray, don't pray with confidence. I think probably when it comes to the matter of prayer most of us have two great failings. . . the first one is this - we don't pray, period. The problem with so many of us is not unanswered prayer as it is unoffered prayer. And so many Christians live their daily lives from week to week without every one time really honestly and earnestly praying. Not availing themselves of the privilege which is a birthright of theirs.

And the second great failing in our Christian life is that when we do pray, most of the time they are not answered and we are not surprised. I think most of us are like the woman that you have heard about who right next to her window was a great mountain. And this mountain was so fast against her window that it blocked out the beautiful sunrise every morning, and so she was reading in the Bible one day where Jesus said if you have faith the size of a grain of mustard seed you can say to this mountain, be moved and it shall be so. And so that night before she went to sleep she got on her knees and she said, Lord, you say in your word that if we have just a little bit of faith we can remove mountains, and so, Lord I want you to move this mountain.

...knowing that what we ask of the Lord is going to be given to us. So she went to bed. She woke up the next morning and looked out the window and she said, just as I expected, the mountain is still there. Now, few of us have ever prayed that God would move a mountain. But most of us, occasionally, occasionally, one is answered. What would have to say, just as I expected, nothing happened.

One of our missionaries to Brazil was on a furlough and he said I get a lot of letters from G.A.'s and they write me about their work and their workers and their sponsors have told them that missionaries are too busy to answer every letter. And he said, I got a letter from a little girl in Temple, Texas, and she said, Dear Brother So-and-So, I am a member of the G.A.'s of the First Baptist of Temple, Texas. I am praying for you, I am not expecting an answer. Truthfully, now would you be surprised if God answered your prayers? Do you pray, when you pray, with confidence? Did you know that if you could pray with confidence that that prayer would be answered? The Bible says in unmistakable terms that when a prayer is offered in confidence in boldness toward God that prayer is answered. And in these two passages John is talking about praying with confidence. What a marvelous feeling this is, to pray with confidence. It's a great feeling to have confidence. To be able to walk into a bank and know that any check you were to write, that bank would cover it. To know that you can go any place and whatever you say, whatever you do, you know it shall be done. That would be great confidence. I have often wondered what it must feel like to be a Rockefeller. To not have any problems that way - to go into any bank and write it for any amount, and never have to wonder whether it's going to clear or not. Confidence. What a tremendous feeling it would be in the physical and financial world. What a great feeling it would be in the spiritual world, if you and I could go into God's presence with absolute assurance and

boldness, knowing that what we ask of the Lord is going to be given to us. But did you know that his is the normal Christian life? For most of us, the normal Christian life is a few half-hearted efforts at prayer, not expecting an answer - occasionally, occasionally, one is answered. What an interesting testimony time it would be if every one here tonight would stand up and give a testimony of the last time I had a prayer answered. The last time I had a prayer answered - you know some of us would have to reach back a number of years. But God expects that the normal Christian experience be that we have fondness with God and receive the things that we ask of him. Now he mentions this word confidence two times in relation to prayer. In the 21st verse of the third chapter ----- and the word toward means face to face with God. Indicates the most intimate relationship. We have confidence, freedom of speech, boldness, in the very presence of God. There is no timidity, no reluctance, no hesitancy about going right into the very presence of God and asking him the things that we desire. Again in the fifth chapter in verse 14 --- confidence, boldness, freedom, that we have in him. (v. 14) . This is the boldness that we have, the absolute freedom just to walk right into God's presence and to ask for whatever we need. It's the same word that is used in Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 16. Where the Bible says

Two little boys playing outside, they are playing in the back yard of the house where one of the boys lives. After a while they get tired, and one of the boys wants to go in the house and play. The little boy who lives in that house opens the back door and just crashes right in, marches right in without a thought. His little playmate hesitates and lingers outside the door. He looks in to see if mother or dad is around. If they are not around he may go in. But if they are around he may be a little bit afraid of that father or that mother. And so he kind of waits until his friend

word of anyone speaks to hearts. All of a sudden I recall that little says come on in, come on in, it's all right. All of us have seen this confidence that I gave to that person behind his back. All of a sudden happen a great many times when our children play. Our own children play. Our own child will just run right in, never give it a second thought, remember those things and my heart condemns me. And I seem it when I but his little playmate kind of lingers outside the door. This is the way a great many of us are when it comes to this matter of prayer. Some of us linger outside the door, we are a little bit hesitant tonight to go directly into God's presence and to bring to him the desire of our heart and the needs of our life, expecting that God is not going to answer it. But in reality we ought to be like that little boy whose home that is standing there accusing you and condemning you all the time. And this is a very real experience of many of us sitting in this place because he is a child of God. This is what it means to pray with confidence. And if you can pray with confidence, your prayers will be answered. Well how do you pray with confidence? These two passages give us four requirements for praying with confidence. And I want us to examine them very closely for a few minutes because praying with confidence makes the difference between prayers answered and prayers dying.

Notice first of all in chapter 3 and verse 20.....

... IF OUR HEART CONDEMN US

condemn means to accuse. If my heart accuses me. He is talking with a guilty conscience. Can anyone say tonight or hasn't never now about the internal judgement of conscience. This is my conscience, if my conscience accuses me - if my heart stands in judgement against me, and brings to my thought, and brings to my consciousness things that condemn me, notice what he says - God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not - then we have confidence towards God. If my heart doesn't condemn me then I can pray with confidence. But how many times do you go to your knees in prayer, and isn't it remarkable how keen your memory gets when you begin to pray? All of a sudden I remember all of those things that I

have done that I should not have done. All of a sudden I recall that word of anger spoken in haste. All of a sudden I recall that little criticism that I gave to that person behind his back. All of a sudden I remember that infraction of God's law - all of a sudden I begin to remember those things and my heart condemns me. And I mean it when I say most of us do not pray because our heart condemns us. Our heart calls up all of the imperfections of our Christian life and it says. And if you were really living for God, you wouldn't do these things and so most of us feel like that we really have no right to go to God in prayer. And you really cannot pray with confidence when your heart is standing there accusing you and condemning you all the time. And this is a very real experience of many of us sitting in this place tonight. You cannot pray with confidence, expecting God to answer, because your heart is condemning you. It accuses you of things that you have done wrong. And what he is saying is this. If you can go into the presence of God and your heart doesn't whisper a word of accusation against you, if you are not conscious of any known sin there separating you from you and your God, he says then you can pray with absolute confidence. And when you pray with confidence we know that we have the petitions that we desire of him. Well who is it tonight that never prays with a guilty conscience? Can anyone say tonight my heart never condemns me? Never does my heart stand and accuse me of things that I have done wrong. And so all of us really are prohibited from praying with confidence because sooner or later every one of us is accused and condemned by our heart.

But, notice what he says in that 20th verse. God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things. John has in mind here a Christian with a guilty conscience. And he thinks that here is a Christian, that because of his guilty conscience will not pray. And he'll forget about praying, he'll say well prayer isn't for me, that's for the super Christian, that's

for that other Christians who is living a better life and so he won't pray. But John says, remember this, that if your heart condemns you, your heart may stand and judge you and accuse you of things that you have done wrong, but remember God is greater than your heart and he knows all things. God is greater than your heart and so he says you go right ahead and pray, remember that the greatness of God and the mercy of God and the grace and forgiveness of God is greater than our sin. And all we have to do really to erase the condemning voice of our heart is merely to confess our sins. John says he is "faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." If your heart does condemn you, the only way you can silence that accusing voice is to remember that God's grace and God's mercy is greater than your heart and if you will bring to him the things that your heart is accusing you of, he can wash them away and he can forgive them. The first thing you have got to have in order to pray with confidence is a clear conscience. Do you have that tonight? Do you have a clear conscience. Do you have boldness to go right into the presence of God and ask anything that you desire? Anything that you need, you can have it. And you must have it if God is to hear your prayers. But that's not the only requirement. He goes on in the 22nd verse "... because WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS" that's the second requirement, because we keep his commandments. Because we keep his commandments. If you will study the Bible carefully you will discover that every promise that God give to His children has with it a corresponding condition -- always. There are no exceptions to this statement. Every promise that God gives to us with regards to prayer, with regard to pouring out upon his blessing, always has with it a corresponding condition. We know that he hears us, and whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments. What does it mean to keep his commandments? What does it mean to keep his

that commandment. I can pray and get my prayers answered. Notice commandments: we have run across this word keep before as we have the next phrase, and love one another as we have the commandment. It is studied I John. And it simply means to keep a watchful eye on the a two-fold commandment. If we keep his commandments, what commandment? commandments of God. And you remember that time when we used the illustration about driving down the highway, and if you want to go to another. That's keeping God's commandments. Now let me ask you a question, are you keeping God's commandments? Are you keeping God's regulate your driving, they regulate your direction. And when the highway sign says go this way, you go that way. And as you are driving you keep a watchful eye on the side of the road for those highway signs because those regulate your life. Well this is exactly the sense that kind of heart has no confidence towards God. You remember Jesus he is talking about in keeping the commandments of God. He is saying that here is a Christian who as he lives his daily life and walks through his daily activities, he keeps an eye on the will of God and he keeps an eye on the commandments of God, and he orders the course of his life, he steers the course of his daily activities according to the commandments of God. And he uses that word which means to do this habitually. This is a habitual attitude of the Christian. I know what some of us do - when we get in a tight place and we want to pray and get an answer all of a sudden we start keeping God's commandments. We have a crash program of spiritual growth and this day we are going to keep God's commandments and we are going to try to live for God today because we want to pray. That's not what he is talking about. God will not hear nor answer the prayer of that kind of Christian who only lines up his life when he knows he is going to need to pray. He is talking about now the Christian who it is the habit of his life to always have one eye on the will of God, one eye on the commandments of God. Are you keeping God's commandments? And you know he doesn't leave us in doubt as to what commandments he is talking about. Notice in verse 23, and this is You say, well that's great, I keep

that commandment. I can pray and get my prayers answered. Notice the next phrase, and love one another as He gave us commandment. It is a two-fold commandment. If we keep his commandments, what commandment? To believe on Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour and to love one another. That's keeping God's commandments. Now let me ask you a question, are you keeping God's commandments? Are you keeping God's commandments: You say well I believe in Jesus. Do you love one another? Are is the attitude of malice and hatred and unforgiveness apparent in your heart? That kind of heart God cannot hear its prayer. That kind of heart has no confidence towards God. You remember Jesus in Matthew chapter 5 said that if you go to the temple and you are going to offer there your sacrifice unto the Lord and there remember that thy brother hath ought against thee. Leave your gift at the altar and first go and be reconciled to thy brother. And then come back and offer your sacrifice unto the Lord. And you notice Jesus does not say if when you come to church you remember that you have ought against your brother. He doesn't say that, he says if you remember that your brother has ought against you. You may not be angry at anybody. You may not have done anything wrong. But if you remember that one of your Christian brethren has something against you - he may be at fault, he may be the one who is harboring that spirit of unforgiveness. But Jesus says it is your responsibility to go to him and make that right. The initiative must be upon your shoulders. If we keep His commandments. The only way you can really know what God's commandments are are to read this book. And every time that I read this book I am awakened again to a commandment of the Lord and God speaks to me. And I do not understand how you can know what God's will is, I cannot understand how you can know what God's commandments are, nor keep those commandments, if you neglect the reading of God's Word. And I dare

-9- backwards to grant his request. Why? Because he has displayed say that the Christian who never opens his Bible except on Sunday morning during the SS hour ever has any prayers answered except by accident, or by coincidence - not by providence. For it is in saying the word of God that you and I are exposed to his commandments. That's the second requirement --. Now notice the third one. That's because we keep his commandments AND, and that little conjunction AND is very important. A N D never to sin, I am careful not to do those things that III. DO THE THINGS THAT ARE PLEASING IN HIS SIGHT. Now that is more than merely keeping God's commandments. Let me give you an illustration of it. Your boy comes home from school. All right, son, today you mow the grass. A groan - you say that's my commandment, if you don't do it you are going to be spanked, you're going to be confined, you're going to be restricted. Mow the grass. So he does it, very obedient. Very obedient, he goes out and mows the grass. Now he has kept your commandment. But you go outside after a while and you see that not only has he mowed the grass but he has also edged, he also picked up the candy wrappers in the yard, he has picked up the sticks and rocks out of the yard and put them in the garbage can. He has swept the grass off the driveway and off the sidewalk. Now he has done more than merely keep your commandment, he has gone farther than that, and he has done the thing that is pleasing in your sight. You see, the first one is a matter of duty, I have to do it, it is my duty. The other is a matter of love. Now if that child comes to you and asks something of you after he has not only done his duty and obeyed your commandment, but he has also gone the second mile and one more than was expected and more than was asked, and he has done the thing which is pleasing in your sight, I guarantee you, you will bend

over backwards to grant his request. Why? Because he has displayed you receive it. Well, that's take an example. Some things I may not the fact that not only does he obey out of fear and duty, but also he knows for certain what God's will is. But there are some things I have has displayed the fact that he loves and his love prompts him to do more than is expected of him. And this is exactly what John is saying. We know that we have the things that we ask of him because we keep his commandments and we do the things that are pleasing in his sight. That's important. Some you say, well I keep God's commandments and I walk a tight line, and I am careful never to sin, I am careful not to do those things that are taboo, I am careful never to offend by my actions, but that is not enough. Are you doing the extra -- going the second mile? Are you doing the things that are pleasing to God? Now this is a real requirement of praying with confidence. And I'll tell you that little boy as he marches in to his mother or dad's presence and he knows that he has done more than just mow the lawn - he has done all that other stuff, he has a lot of confidence when he walks in and says will you do such and such for me? That gives him confidence. It is exactly what God is talking about in these verses.

And then there is one final requirement mentioned -- verse 14, chapter 5 ----

ANYTHING --- no limitation, save one, ACCORDING TO HIS WILL.

The first three requirements had to do with the person praying. The person praying has to be right. This last requirement has to do with what you are praying for - it has to be the right thing. Praying according to His will. Now I want you to read that verse again because it has a tremendous promise of God. Do you believe that? Do you really believe that? You see all of these overlap because if I am keeping His commandments, and if I am doing the things that are pleasing in His sight, and if my heart doesn't condemn, I'm not going to be asking for things that are contrary to the will of God. And if you ask for anything, anything according to the will of God, he says

you receive it. Well, let's take an example. Some things I may not know for certain what God's will is. But there are some things I have no doubt about the will of God. For instance, I have heard people pray this way sometimes praying for a lost man, Lord, if it be thy will, save him. That's not the way to pray. II Peter 3:15 says It is God's will that a lost man be saved. Do you believe that? It is God's will that a lost man be saved. John says - v. 14. According to His will, we receive it, he hears us. Now what God is saying is this - if I can come into God's presence with confidence, my heart not condemning me, as far as I know, as best I can, I have kept his commandments. I have tried to do the things that are pleasing in his sight, I come into His presence with confidence, because of that, I ask that God save so and so -- he says he will do it. You say, well I prayed that God would save this man and God didn't do it. Well, one of two things -- either you are not praying with confidence, full confidence, your heart was condemning you, you were disobedient, there was something wrong in your life, or God has answered that prayer already and it just has not come to fulfillment.

Let me show you a great thing in this verse. It is in both of these verse. He says in verse 15 -- and I am going to read this literally, just as it is in the language of the New Testament --- whatsoever we are asking we know that we are having the petitions that we desired of him. Now John is saying here that while we are asking, God is answering. The very minute I ask, God answers. He says the same thing in verse 22 of chapter 3 ----- we are receiving of him. Listen to this - Mark 11:24 - Jesus speaking 'believe that you have got it' --- that's the Moffatt translation and it is the correct one. Believe that you have already received it and you shall have it. You say that doesn't make sense. When you pray, believe that you have it and you will get it --- that's what it says.

R. A. Torrey, the great evangelist and Bible scholar of a generation ago says that thing used to bother me all the time until I stopped worrying about the grammar and just trusted God to keep His word. Now it doesn't make much sense when you read it, it doesn't sound logical, but it says "whatsoever things you desire when you pray, believe that you receive it and ye shall have it" -- believe that you already have it? Right - and you shall have it. You see the granting of that prayer is immediate. Sometimes the fulfillment is later on. And when you pray, this is the confidence - this is praying with confidence. Going into the presence of God, and it happens too rarely in our lives when you go into the presence of God and you say, Lord do such and such. And you get up off of your knees and you say, thank you, Lord for answering that prayer and it may be a year before you receive the fulfillment of that prayer, but you know in your heart that God has answered it. That's exactly what he is saying.

I remember Dr. C. E. Autrey when I was in seminary, he was our evangelism professor, said, I was preaching a revival meeting in a certain church in a Texas town - it was the driest, deadest thing all week long nothing happening, nobody saved, no moving of the spirit of God. He said Saturday night I began to pray and I went to my knees and I said, Lord with your help I'm not going to get off my knees until you answer my prayer. And he said I stayed on my knees until 3 a.m. in the morning and at 3:00 in the morning God answered my prayer and God told me that we were going to have a great number of people saved. God answered my prayer at 3 o'clock in the morning. He said I didn't pray anymore, I stopped, I went to church, I didn't pray before the service (God has already answered my prayer). He said I preached, I gave the invitation, and scores of people streamed down the aisle, accepting Christ as Saviour. He said God answered my prayer at 3 a.m. - I arose from my knees just as certain that those

people were going to be saved as if they had already been saved. Now that's praying with confidence. And strange as it may sound this is exactly what he is saying in these verses that if you and I pray with confidence, remember those things that bring confidence, come into God's presence and ask anything - according to His will, we have it, he answers it right then. It may be granted and given to us immediately, it may come later on, but God answers it immediately. God answers that prayer immediately. It may be five years before that answer is fulfilled and before that man is saved or before that petition is granted, but in the mind of God it is already granted, already answered. This is what it means to pray with confidence. That's living by faith knowing that God is going to do it even though you can't see it. Knowing that God is going to give it to you even though you can't hold it in your hands, knowing that God is already determined to save that person even though you have not seen him yet walk down that aisle. If you ask anything according to His will, we have it. What a tremendous treasure house that is. I can think of a hundred things that are God's will for this church. I can think of dozens of things that are God's will for my life. It's not God's will that I be defeated, it's God's will that I overcome temptation, it's God's will that I be filled with the Spirit, it's God's will that I be a soul winner. It's God's will that you not gossip and criticize. It's God's will that we don't lose our temper, it's God's will that we live in love with one another. It's God's will that our church increase in baptisms, it's God's will that our people tithe. It's God's will that our church is blessed. Dozens and dozens of things that we know without a shadow of doubt is God's will. And he says if we ask anything according to God's will, we'll have it. You know why we're not having it? Because we are not asking. You know why we're not asking -- because we don't