

1 John 5:13-15. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. ¹⁴ This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

Approach God with confidence.

1. You have eternal through faith in Jesus

2. You have a Father who you can trust to answer your prayers

Some people have the special ability to walk up to just about anyone and start a conversation. They are comfortable and free in conversing, even with someone of importance. They are not afraid to push to the front of the crowd and ask an athlete for an autograph. They are not afraid to approach a public figure and ask a pressing question. Often such people are also persistent in their efforts, at times relentless.

The widow in Jesus' parable was certainly an example of this type of person. She was relentless. She was persistent. She was not afraid to come to the judge and present her request time and time again.

Maybe you don't naturally have that kind of outgoing personality; maybe you do. Either way God wants you to know that you can have that kind of confidence when you pray to him. **You can approach God with confidence because you have been made right with God through faith in Christ Jesus. You can approach God with confidence because you have a Father who you can trust to answer your prayers.**

John's first epistle revolves around just a few key themes. John goes back to them again and again; reassuring his readers of these basic truths. One of these basic concepts is that "believers know". *Believers know* that they have a gracious God. *Believers know* that God is our Father and we are his children. *Believers know* that they can come to God with our requests with our problems. *Believers know* that they have forgiveness and eternal life through Jesus.

This is the source of our confidence before God, isn't it? As one writer put it, we don't sing Jesus loves me this I wonder, this I wish, we sing Jesus loves me this I know. Believers don't have to wonder if God likes them. We don't have to wonder if he cares about us or has time for us, but through faith in Christ Jesus we know, we

can be sure. You can be sure that God approves of you and likes you and loves you. You can be sure that God keeps a watchful eye on you and has sent his angels to attend to you. Through faith in Jesus you can be sure that God has written your name engraved on the palm of his hand and written in the book of life. Through faith in Jesus and through God's holy Word we are assured, and reassured, and made confident of these truths.

So when we confess our sins to God, when we pray for forgiveness, when we ask him for a quiet conscience and the peace that Jesus brings he hears us. Such requests he has promised to freely fulfill. We can be confident that he will grant us this request. He tells us, ***"Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest."*** When we ask him to watch over us and care for us we know that this is the God who has told us that he will watch over our comings and goings both now and forevermore (Psalm 121:8). This is the God who promises to send his angels to attend to us (Psalm 91:11). This is our Savior who promises us that he will be with us always to the very end of the age. (Matthew 28:20) When we ask for his gift of eternal life we have that blessing right now, believers have already begun to live eternally. With have this confidence because God is always true to his word. He promises us such things and so when we ask for them we have them immediately. These are things that he gives to us through faith in Christ Jesus. This is the confidence that we have in God. We don't have to wonder if he is going to fulfill this request, but we can go to him knowing that this will be ours.

So then why should we bother to pray for such things? Why should we pray for his protection and care? Why should we pray for pardon and peace? Why should we pray and ask him for his grace and forgiveness and eternal life, gifts that we know are ours already? Well, God wants us to pray for such things because prayer is not only a chance for us to submit our to do list of needs before our heavenly Father, but it is an exercise of faith. It is an opportunity to review what our Father, and what our Savior, and what the Holy Spirit, has done for us. It is an opportunity to consider what great things he does for us daily. It is an opportunity to cling to his promises and relearn and revisit these precious truths so that we may properly adjust our grip on these wonderful gifts and then hold on to them even more tightly to them.

Prayer provides us the opportunity to reflect on the fact that God has answered so many of our requests even before our asking. God provides for us as our Father. He restores our relationship with him and He forgives our sins. He does so because he served as the atoning sacrifice for our sins as our Savior. God the Holy Spirit also works in us the miracle of faith and establishes and daily maintains his kingdom in his heart through the precious means of grace. This is the good and gracious will of our holy and merciful God, and all this he does even

without our asking. So when we do ask this is our opportunity to thank him and to consider what he has done for us. When our doubting flesh and our evil foe are so hard at work to convince us this is not the case, a review of his mercy to start our prayer is a way in which God reassures us of his love. As we recount our Lord's mercies we are once again made certain of his love and we are also brought into the proper mindset to present our requests to God.

As we pray we recognize that we are certainly not worthy of such an honor, to come before God and speak with him, but this is part of his gracious will. And so in his Word God reassures of a relationship that is fully restored. We are reminded time and again that we his children and he is our loving father. This is the relationship that we have with God through faith in Christ Jesus, and so when we pray it is not as if we are approaching the all-important and unapproachable, but when we pray we can come before the all-important and mighty God like children making a simple request to their father.

We can approach God with confidence. We can approach him freely. We can present our requests to him with boldness and courage. Prayer is an opportunity to approach him with confidence; but sometimes we confuse that with arrogance. In prayer too often we rush right in with our problems and our proposed solutions, but we don't even hesitate to consider if this is God pleasing. In our sinful arrogance there are times that we pray for what we want with a careless and even blatant disregard for his will. We might even ignore his simple commands. We ask selfishly ask for things that God does not want us to have. In our sinful arrogance we rush in with our wants and desires and we carry with us a preconceived notion of how God should respond. We ask for quick fixes when God wants us to develop patience. We pray for wealth and health when God wants us to learn how to be content and learn how to trust in him and persevere. At times we pray and when he doesn't answer the way that we have decided is good and right then in our sin we wonder if he is even listening. He is our good and merciful Father he does hear us whenever we pray. We are to pray with confidence, but not in arrogance.

We are able to approach God with reverence and humility, but ultimately with the confidence of a child asking his dear Father. Through Jesus we are God's children, we must remember this, so that we may approach him with a humble confidence that stems from a trust in our wonderful God. We trust in our faithful God, who is our perfect Father who cares about us and loves us perfectly. As a loving Father he is not going to spoil his children by saying yes to our every request. Instead we trust that he will know exactly what we need, he knows exactly what we should have asked for, and he will answer as he knows best.

In his Popular Commentary of the Bible Paul Kretzman describes this confidence and trust we have in approaching God well when he writes, *God always*

listens to the prayers of His children, reading their content even better than they intend it. We are sure of obtaining our requests, that which we are in need of, probably not always as our petition was worded, but always as it was best for us, and as we should have offered our prayer had we been wiser. Prayer is not a dictation for God to do thus and so, (for that would be arrogance, wouldn't it) but a statement of our needs as we see them. And it is our heavenly Father who gives us more than our short-sightedness permitted us to know. If we have reached this point in our Christian knowledge, then our relation toward our heavenly Father will be unclouded by any lack of trust in Him.

Prayer is an exercise of faith, it is an undertaking of trust in which we thrust our problems and anxieties, our requests and petitions, to our loving and all knowing God. We present our requests to God and believe that he will answer as he sees fit. After all he is our all-knowing Father in heaven. Not only is he wise and experienced like an earthly father, but he knows everything. In his perfect wisdom he knows how his answers to our prayers will affect us and everyone and everything else. He alone truly knows what is good and right. He knows when to say yes. He knows when it is right to say no. He knows when to make us wait. He knows what is best for us. This is the confidence and trust that is woven into the very fabric our prayers: God is our father and he will answer in the way that is best for us.

You may not ever command the audience of a star or an important figure. You may not ever be able to approach a person of national fame or global importance. You may not ever have the opportunity or the desire to do such a thing. But you, each and every one of you, can approach your almighty God with confidence on a daily basis. You can approach your heavenly father with confidence. You can approach him freely, and boldly. You can hold him to his promises. You can make your requests to him, and wrestle with him in prayer, because you have been made right with God through faith in Christ Jesus. You can approach God with confidence because you have a Father who you can trust to answer your prayers in the best way possible. Amen.