Praying for the Salvation of the Lost
Scripture: 1 John 5
Code: BQ041912

This is the confidence which we have before 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 which we have asked from Him. (5:14–15)

As noted above, the full experience of eternal life awaits Christians in heaven. But though they have not yet entered into their eternal inheritance (cf. 1 Peter 1:4), they have access to all of God's resources through prayer. *Parrsia* (**confidence**) literally means "freedom of speech" (cf. the discussion of 3:21 in chapter 13 of this volume). It can also be translated "boldness" (Acts 4:31), or "openness" (Acts 28:31). The phrase translated **before Him** has the sense of "in His presence." Through Jesus Christ believers have "boldness and confident access" (Eph. 3:12) to God that enables them to "draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that [they] may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

The sure promise of God is that when believers boldly and freely come to Him with their requests, He will hear and answer. **If we ask anything according to His will**, John wrote, **He hears us**. And if we know that **He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him**. Hearing in this context refers to more than merely God's being aware of believers' requests; it also means that He grants the requests which we have asked from Him. That is nothing less than a blank check to ask God for anything, but it comes with one important qualifier: the requests must be according to His will.

To pray according to God's will assumes first of all being saved. God is not obligated to answer the prayers of unbelievers. He may choose to do so when it suits His sovereign purposes, but God does not obligate Himself to any unbeliever. John illustrated this principle when he wrote earlier in this epistle, "Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight" (3:21–22). The Lord Jesus Christ made a similar statement, recorded in John 15:7: "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you [the definition of a genuine believer], ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you" (cf. v. 16). Only believers, those who obey God's commandments, can have the certainty that He will answer their prayers.

Praying according to God’s will also means confessing sin. The psalmist wrote in Psalm 66:18, “If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear” (cf. 1 Peter 3:7).

Again, the Lord’s promise in John 14:13–14 affirms the requirement of praying according to God’s will: “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.” To pray in Jesus’ name is to pray consistent with who He is, with the goal of bringing Him glory. It is to follow the pattern of His model prayer: “Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10), and His example of humble submission to the Father’s will when He prayed in Gethsemane, “Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done” (Luke 22:42). The goal of prayer is not to gratify our selfish desires (cf. James 4:3), but to align our wills with God’s purposes.

Praying according to God’s will not only brings glory to the Son, but also joy to believers. “Truly, truly, I say to you,” Jesus said, “if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full” (John 16:23–24). When obedient believers delight themselves in the Lord, He will plant the desires in their hearts for what glorifies Him (Ps. 37:4), and those desires will control their prayers. God’s answers to those prayers will glorify Him, bring believers’ wills into line with His purposes, and fill them with joy.

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