

1 JOHN: DISCERNING TRUE FROM FALSE SPIRITUALITY

Part XVI: True Spirituality's Effectiveness In Coordinating Prayer With God's Will

(1 John 5:14-17)

I. Introduction

- A. The Apostle John had clarified in 1 John 3:22 that one of the blessings of true fellowship with God is gaining answers to prayer, that God heeds prayers that are made to Him by those believers who obey His commands.
- B. However, another requirement for answered prayer is praying in the will of God, what John covers in 1 John 5:14-15, but it is impossible to know God's will in certain cases as is revealed in 1 John 5:16-17.
- C. Accordingly, 1 John 5:14-17 reveals the effectiveness of those who fellowship with God in coordinating their prayers with the will of God even though they humanly are not equipped to know all of that divine will:

II. True Spirituality's Effectiveness In Coordinating Prayer With God's Will, 1 John 5:14-17.

- A. In 1 John 5:14-15, the Apostle John noted that believers in fellowship with God who pray, giving their petitions to God that they know are in His will, have assurance that they will receive answers to those prayers:
 1. Believers in fellowship with God can have assurance (*parresia*, "courage, boldness, fearlessness," Arndt & Gingrich, *A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T.*, 1967, p. 635-636) in the Lord relative to prayer, 1 John 5:14a.
 2. That confidence rests in the awareness that if we "ask, request" [for our benefit, middle voice] (*aitometha*, middle voice of *aito*, *The Analyt. Grk. Lex.* (1972), p. 10-11) a petition of God in prayer that is according to His will, God then hears us, 1 John 5:14b.
 3. If God hears us making our petition in prayer, we know that we have the petitions "we have permanently asked" (*etekamen*, perfect tense of *aito*, *Ibid.*, p. 189, 10) from Him, 1 John 5:15.
- B. However, not all human needs are supposed to be met due to God's will. For example, we note the case of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11 who sinned so grievously in God's view that He punished them with rapid death to the shock of the Church! Prayer for the physical preservation of such believers is thus outside God's will simply because we mortal believers cannot possibly know all the details of God's work in another believer's life. John thus addresses this matter of our limitations in knowing God's will in 1 John 5:16:
 1. John wrote that if a believer sees his brother in Christ sin in a way that does not result in God's discipline of a relatively quick physical death, he should ask God in prayer for that believer to have life, and God will grant him life if he has not sinned to the point of being punished with a shortened lifespan, 1 John 5:16a.
 2. However, John added that there is a sin that must lead to premature death in God's view, 1 John 5:16b, and concerning such a case, John claimed that he himself as an authoritative Apostle of Christ was not saying that one should even pray about a believer who may be guilty of such a sin, 1 John 5:16c.
 3. John thus carefully avoided actually prohibiting prayer for the believer who sins in such a case likely for two reasons: (a) if the sin was a wrong committed against the believer John is addressing, the victim may be tempted to avoid praying in vengeance that the wrongdoer not be granted a long life, and that in turn would be a serious sin (Romans 12:19). (b) Also, no one knows God's will regarding a specific believer's specific sin, so no other mortal can pray with any assurance of even knowing God's will in such a case.
 4. Thus, all John teaches here is that when another believer sins severely where the godly are not sure how God will respond, the Lord gives freedom for the godly either to petition life for or to refrain from doing so for the sinful one solely out of respect for the sometimes humanly unknowable will of God!
- C. In 1 John 5:17, John concluded this section by claiming that all unrighteousness is sin, that there is a level of sin that does not result in God's soon slaying or even noticeably shortening the lifespan of a sinning believer. Accordingly, God wants us to be flexible in praying for believers who sin since we are very limited in our knowledge of His workings with other people. We must always maintain a love for all believers, even those who sin severely, but we must also deeply revere the Lord Who is sovereign over us in how He responds to it!

Lesson: *If we know God's Biblical will on a given matter of need, we can be fully confident that if we petition God in prayer in alignment with that will that He hears us, and if He hears us, He will grant us the petitions we have asked of Him. However, in those realms where it is impossible for us mortals to know God's will as in the case of a believer who sins severely, God lets us be flexible in our prayer for that one so as to respect His will while also avoiding a spirit of vengeance and hatred toward the sinning believer.*

Application: *May we pray in the known will of God, assured of God's answers for us, but regarding matters outside God's known will, may we pray in love for fellow brethren but in reverence for the Lord Who is sovereign over us.*