

***“Praying and Receiving”***

November 20, 2011

Text: 1 John 3:22-24

**In 1836, George Muller and his wife began a home for orphans, housing 30 girls.**

By 1845, he had 4 such houses & was caring for 130 children.

In 1849 he built Ashley Down, which housed 300 children.

By 1871 he had 5 such buildings, housing 1845 orphans.

Through all of this, Muller never asked for financial support from anyone, and he never went into debt, even though the cost of the 5 buildings was over 100,000 lbs., in the 19<sup>th</sup> century economy (millions of dollars today).

His financial plan was simple=> Pray to God for support.

Jms 1:27 says pure/undefiled religion in God’s sight is=>

*“to visit **orphans** & widows in their distress.”*

That’s what he did, asking for God’s blessing on his efforts.

Many times he received unsolicited food donations just hours before they were needed to feed the children, further strengthening his faith in God for His sovereign/gracious/faithful provision.

On one well-documented occasion, he gave thanks for breakfast when all the children were sitting at the table, & there was nothing in the house to eat.

As he finished praying, a local baker knocked on the door with enough bread to feed everyone.

Then a milkman showed up in w/ lots of fresh milk because his cart had broken down in front of the orphanage.

**The subject of today's text is praying and receiving.**

John begins with the amazing statement=> *“Whatever we ask we receive from Him.”*

That's like God signing a blank check & handing it to Xns. I can only hope this text will stir you to pray for us/our-church.

Without God's blessing this ministry can accomplish nothing of any eternal value/consequence.

But I believe there are many times when God ignores believers' prayers because of the state of their hearts.

Psa 66:18=> *“If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will **not** hear.”*

**There are certain conditions that must be true in a Xn's heart before God will grant his/her prayer requests.**

These conditions don't apply to a nonbeliever's prayer.

If the H.S. enables him to repent of his sin and pray to Jesus X in faith for his soul's salvation, he will receive it regardless of the condition of his life.

The only qualification for a sinner's 1<sup>st</sup> prayer is sincerity. For believers, however, the case is a bit different, since they are children of God, under a special discipline w/i His family. There are also special privileges for them to enjoy—special answers to prayer that are unavailable to the unsaved. It's here that those prerequisites for answered prayer apply.

God, like every good father, will always take care of His children's basic needs—sometimes through other believers. But when His children seek those other choice blessings, He will grant or withhold them, based on certain conditions in their hearts/lives.

**In 1 Jn 3:22-24, we find six such conditions which, if true in a believer's heart/life, will lead to answered prayer...**

**\* Condition #1—Obedience**

[1 John 3:22a]=> *“And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we **keep His commandments**”*

**Obedience to God's commandments brings divine blessing just as disobedience brings divine discipline.**

In Judges 10:12 God told His disobedient people Israel=>

*“When the Sidonians, the Amalekites and the Maonites oppressed you, you cried out to Me, and I delivered you from their hands. / Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods; therefore I will deliver you no more. / Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your distress” (12-14).*

**If a human father were to grant his disobedient child's request, he would reinforce rebellion to his authority, not only in that child's heart, but throughout his whole family.**

If someone were to say to him, “You're being petty and unloving,” he should answer, “No, I'm responding this way to his request for his good because I do love him.”

If God granted the kinds of prayers His disobedient children pray, it would simply increase their sinfulness.

- \* Self-willed Xns pray for greater freedom so they can be more self-willed/obstinate.
- \* Proud Xns want more status so they can become more haughty.
- \* Lazy Xns seek for less interference w/ their slothfulness.
- \* Domineering Xns desire more power, in order to increase their dominance.

Should God grant such desires? Absolutely not!

James says=> *“You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. / You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?”* (Jms 4:3-4).

God will never do anything that makes Xns more worldly or hostile towards Himself.

**By contrast, John says=>** *“Whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments.”*

We keep God’s commandments out of our love for Him, and because we have humbled ourselves before Him.

God’s commands are not a check list of demands we obey in order to give Him what He wants, so He’ll repay us by giving us what we want.

In keeping His commandments we respond to God’s will as Jesus did out of love, in order to draw ever closer to our God and please Him.

**If you want a quick list of ways to make your prayers more likely to be heard by God, here's the list=>**

- \* Pray according to God's will (1 Jn 5:14)
- \* Pray in Jesus' name (Jn 16:23)
- \* Pray for things that will glorify Him (Jms 4:2-3)
- \* Pray with faith, not with doubt (Jms 1:6)
- \* Pray with your sins repented-of/confessed (Psa 66:18).

That's the list, but it will only be as effective as your heart is right, and your own relationship with God is close/loving.

- \* I.e., pray for God's will as Jesus did—because that's really what you sincerely/earnestly desire.
- \* Pray in Jesus' name because you're really convinced He would ask His Father for the same things you are seeking.
- \* Sincerely desire to glorify God, and truly believe that your request will actually accomplish that.
- \* Pray with faith, not doubting, because your closeness to God has erased all doubt that He will answer your prayer.
- \* Truly confess/repent-of your sins, making sure your prayer itself won't add to them because it's prayed w/ selfish hypocrisy.

The real key to answered prayer is the condition of our hearts;  
And the closeness of our relationship with God.

**If all that is true of us, we can say with confidence that we  
have been obedient to God’s commandments.**

We obey Him because His love for us has caused us to love Him.

1 Jn 3:1=> *“See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God.”*

Our Father/child relationship with the Lord is growing ever-closer, & we are drawing ever-nearer to Him, as we obey Him.

John is encouraging us to enter fully into that relationship w/ God, delighting in His love, as He delights to grant our petitions.

In Mt 7:11, Jesus said=> *“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!”*

**\* Condition #2—Reverence**

[Verse 22b]=> *“and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.”*

**Having a reverent attitude to our Lord as we pray to Him,  
is all-important.**

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and it’s an absolute necessity for answered prayer.

God is not to be treated like a candy-dispenser, mindlessly handing out blessings on demand.

He is to be revered as our beloved Father.

We are to obey Him because we love to please Him.

That is the great desire of our hearts.

Paul tells us to make that our ambition (II Cor 5:9)=>  
learning how to please God (Eph 5:10), living our  
whole lives so as to please Him in all respects  
(Col 1:10), and recognizing that it's our duty to do so  
(I Thes 4:1).

Jesus is the supreme example of both pleasing God and being  
heard by Him in prayer.

In John's Gospel, Jesus said that the Father always heard  
Him, & that He always did the things that were  
pleasing to His Father (Jn 11:42/8:29).

**Ephesians 6 says that good/godly children obey/honor their  
parents *"in the Lord"* simply because *"this is right"*  
(Eph 6:1).**

This is the way it's supposed to be.

A Xn child whose heart is right with God will say, "My father (or  
mother) has told me to do this/that, and I will do it because  
I love to please them."

By the same token, knowing that a particular act would  
displease his/her parents can be a strong deterrent to  
that child's doing something that is wrong.

However, if a child's demeanor & tone-of-voice communicate  
disdain, should the father give in to his child's demands?  
Only a foolish parent allows his child to become his master.

And when he does so, it's usually because the parent himself is weak and emotionally-needy, desperate for his child's approval.

In God's house there is proper order because, He is neither one.

When His self-willed children make petulant demands of Him, implying that if He doesn't give in to them, they won't like Him, He is sure to deny their request.

Beyond that, He may well discipline them to humble their proud hearts before Him.

Not out of irritation, but out of His love for them.

**We are to pray reverently/humbly as Jesus prayed=>**

***“Not My will but Thine be done.”***

We say to our Lord, in essence, “Father, if my request doesn't please You, ignore it, and replace it with whatever I should have prayed (even if that's not my own desire right now).

“The Spirit prays for me with deep groanings (Rom 8:26) what I should have prayed for myself, & what He prays is what I want—Your will.”

Our prayers must never dictate to God as if trying to compel Him to bend to our will—however reluctantly.

He is the gracious Father we love/serve, not a slave who anxiously waits for us to tell Him what He should do with His own universe.

The prayer God answers is a humble/reverent prayer for what pleases Him, not for what will gratify our ego.

**\* Condition #3—Faith**

[Verse 23a]=> “*And this is **His** [the Father’s] commandment, that we **believe** in the **name** of His Son Jesus Christ,*”

Actually, God’s “*commandment*” is a 2-part command—1<sup>st</sup> that we should believe in X’s name; 2<sup>nd</sup> that we should love one another (which we’ll see in the second half of this verse).

**God commands us to believe in the name of His Son.**

“*Believe*” here refers to the initial act of placing one’s faith in Jesus X for the salvation of his soul.

But John shows us that this is then to lead to a whole life of faith.

Someone: If we’re commanded to do that, it must be a good work.

That’s true, it is; Jesus said=> “*This is the **work of God**, that you **believe** in Him whom He has sent*” (Jn 6:29).

It is a good work, but it’s God’s work, and yet we are commanded to do it.

Paul said, “*By grace you have been saved through **faith**; & that not of yourselves, it is the **gift** of God, not of [human] works*” (Eph 2:8).

Faith is a gift from God, but God commands us to exercise that faith once He has given it to us, and to do so as an act of our own regenerated will.

**But what is it about Jesus that we are commanded to believe?**

His “*name*”—everything God has revealed to us in His Word about who/what Jesus was/is=> God’s Son, Jesus Christ.

In that name God has compressed the whole doctrine of X.

\* He is “*His [God’s] Son*”—Lord/Creator of the universe.

Do you believe that?

\* He is “*Jesus,*” a real true man, born to the woman named Mary of Nazareth—a Man who died for other men’s sin and was then resurrected back to life by God.

Do you believe that?

\* He is the “*Christ,*” the Anointed One anticipated by OT, whom God promised to send to save/rule-the-world.

Do you believe that?

**Faith that Jesus is indeed “[God’s] Son Jesus Christ,” is an absolute necessity for answered prayer.**

Our prayer’s success will be in proportion to our faith in X, who said to the 2 blind men=> “*Be it done to you according to your faith*” (Mt 9:29).

Our faith must be in His name, because He said=> “*If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it*” (Jn 14:14).

The great enemy to such faith is doubt—which impedes our prayer.

James wrote=> “*Ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. / For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord*” (Jms 1:6-7).

Doubting Jesus’ name is doubting God’s integrity/character, because X’s name is who God says His Son is.

**Suppose a son doubted his father’s reliability & love for him.**

Suppose he went to his father like the Prodigal Son and asked for his inheritance, explaining that he considered his father a spendthrift who would prob. waste/squander his money before he died, preventing his son from ever getting his hands on it.

So he wanted his inheritance now, to deposit it in a bank or to invest it more wisely than his father would.

Suppose the son added that it wasn't his fault that he didn't trust or believe in his father—that Dad had brought it on himself.

Suppose then that the son asked for \$5000 immediately, so he could go out, set up his own apartment, and live independently.

What are the chances the father would give him the money?

**In Mt 6, Jesus said=>** *“I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing? / Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?”* (Mt 6:25-26).

When we doubt our Heavenly Father's love for us, or either His ability/willingness to provide for our needs, our attitude is just insulting/unfair toward God as the Prodigal's attitude was toward his father.

We cast doubt on our Heavenly Father's character.

We shouldn't expect Him to answer our prayers then, condoning and making provision for our hurtful/insulting/arrogant foolishness.

\* **Condition #4—Love**

[Verse 23b]-- "*and love one another, just as He commanded us.*"

**This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of God's command to us.**

If we obeyed this command perfectly, we would love just as

Jesus loved, and He was the embodiment of love.

We would abound in lovingkindness for God, for X, for our brothers/sisters in the faith, & for every man/woman around us.

Anyone who makes contact with us gets loved.

We would even love our enemies (Lk 6:27).

But we would have a special love for fellow believers (the "*one another*" John mentions).

**God has commanded us to love with His own *agape* love, which He has poured into our hearts (Rom 5:5).**

This is a love based on will, just as a mother sets her love on her baby, long before the infant is even capable of doing anything to earn it.

It is a love that willingly makes sacrifices (even self-sacrifice) for the one it loves.

It's a love that involves the feelings of love at times, but even when those feelings are absent, it continues, out of commitment to the object of its love.

Jesus has commanded us to love as He does, even when there is little/no expectation that our love will be returned in kind. That love is to show itself in practical deeds of kindness to others.

And it is to reach up to the level of God's own love.

Luke 6 (Jesus)=> *“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. / And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. / And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, in order to receive back the same amount. / But **love your enemies**, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men”* (Lk 6:32-35).

**God answers the prayers of those who are the walking embodiment of love—like His Son.**

His whole religion is a religion of heartfelt love.

He is less concerned about what we know, than how we love.

If a person has no love for either God/man, should God entrust him with the keys to His limitless promise=>

*“Whatever we ask, we receive from Him”?*

Should God arm such a criminal with that kind of power, knowing that he'll never use it for the good of God's own children, but will always squander it on himself?

A son like that couldn't be trusted to do anything but bankrupt his whole family w/ his sinful selfishness.

The blunt truth of the matter is, that God doesn't answer the prayers of unloving Xns.

I believe that's the main reason why Xn's prayers go unanswered.

**\* Condition #5—Abiding**

[Verse 24a]=> *“And the one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him.”*

**“Abide” is one of John's favorite words for being born again.**

In John 15, Jesus illustrated what it means to abide in Him with the parable of the vine and the branches.

It's a spiritual connection to X by which we draw our spiritual life from Him, & produce spiritual fruit.

In 1 John, we have learned that those who abide in X ought to walk as X walked (2:6), love their brothers (2:10), and hold to the truth of God's Word (2:24).

They are permanently indwelt by the H.S. (2:27), don't constantly practice sin (3:6), and have the seed of God's nature remaining w/i them (3:9).

Now John adds that those who abide in X keep his commandments.

**“Abide” refers to remaining, but it also connotes a settling-in.**

Our hearts dwell, settle-in, & feel-at-home in our relationship with Christ.

We settle down in Him, as we keep His commands.

Our obedience to X results in homelike fellowship w/ Him.

We develop a holy/humble familiarity w/ God.

At the same time, He settles/dwells-in us, making Himself at home in our hearts.

In Eph 3, Paul prayed that God would strengthen the

Ephesian Xns=> “*so that Christ may  **dwell in your hearts through faith**” (3:16-17), as one would dwell in a warm home.*

In the 7<sup>th</sup> century, a monk called the Venerable Bede wrote=>

“Let God, then, be a home for you, and you be a home for God; remain in God and let God remain in you.”

Under these circumstances, Jesus said=> “*If you  **abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you**” (Jn 15:7).*

Loving obedience bears the Xn’s soul up to the throne of God.

His prayers become the kind of prayers God answers.

**But suppose a child said to his father, “I’m not comfortable in your house, w/ all its rules, & frankly, I don’t like being around you. But I still plan to come/ask you for help/cash.”**

How likely is the father to agree to that arrangement?

It’s that way with God=> If we will live in communion w/ Him, loving/trusting/obeying Him, then He will give us all things.

If not, He won’t allow us to make a mockery of His grace, by granting our requests.

As David says (Psa 37:4)=> *“Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart.”*

**\* Condition #6—Yieldedness**

[Verse 24b]=> *“And we know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.”*

**The H.S. is the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out**

***“Abba Father” (Rom 8:15), as He bears witness w/ our spirit that we are the children of God.***

He indwells/works in the hearts of God’s children; & those who yield to the Spirit produce the fruit of the Spirit=>

*“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, / gentleness, self-control” (Gal 5:22-23).*

The same mind is in those who are Spirit-filled, as is also in X Himself.

Their old resistance to God’s will has melted in love/faith towards Him, and now they yield to His Spirit’s direction, as He empowers them to do so.

So, like X, they can pray to God=> *“I know that Thou hearest Me always” (Jn 11:42).*

We are sure the Jesus Christ abides in us because of the radical change we see in our lives=> At one time we disobeyed/chafed-at God’s commands, but now we keep them, as holy/precious to our hearts.

We know this is due to the Spirit’s influence w/i our hearts.

**God answers Xns’ prayers if their hearts are yielded to Him.**

The willful unbeliever finds God's will grievous & he foolishly  
thinks the Lord will come around to his way of thinking.  
But Xns who are yielded to the H.S. seek God's will, not their  
own, and so He hears/answers their prayers, and they  
delight in Him.

They can pray w/ Fanny Crosby=>

O, the pure delight of a single hour	Draw me nearer, blessed Lord.
That before Thy throne I spend,	To the cross where Thou hast died;
When I kneel in prayer, and with Thee, my God	Draw me nearer, blessed Lord,
I commune as friend with Friend.	To Thy precious, bleeding side.

## ***“Praying and Receiving”***

November 20, 2011

Text: 1 John 3:22-24

1. There are certain conditions that must be true in a Christian’s heart before God will grant his or her [14 prayer] requests.

Jms 1:27; Psa 66:18

**In 1 John 3:22-24 we find six conditions which, if true in a believer’s heart and life, will lead to answered prayer...**

### **\* Condition #1—Obedience**

**[1 John 3:22a]**

Judg 10:12-14

2. If a human father were to grant his disobedient child’s request, he would reinforce [22 rebellion] to his authority.

Jms 4:3-4

3. Ways to make your prayers heard by God: pray according to God’s will, pray in Jesus’ name, pray for things that will glorify Him, pray with faith, and pray with your sins [22 confessed].

1 Jn 5:14; Jn 16:23; Jms 4:2-3; 1:6; Psa 66:18; 1 Jn 3:1

4. John is encouraging us to enter fully into our relationship with God, delighting in His [10 love] as He delights to grant our petitions.

Mt 7:11

### **\* Condition #2—Reverence**

**[Verse 22b]**

II Cor 5:9; Col 1:10; I Thes 4:1; Jn 11:42; 8:29; Eph 6:1

5. In God’s house when His self-willed children make petulant demands of Him, He is sure to [10 deny] their request.

Rom 8:26

### **\* Condition #3—Faith**

**[Verse 23a]**

6. “*Believe*” here refers to the initial act of placing one’s faith in Jesus Christ; but John shows us that this is then to lead to a whole [10 life] of faith.

Jn 6:29; Eph 2:8; Mt 9:29; Jn 14:14; Jms 1:6-7

7. Doubting Jesus' name is doubting God's integrity and character because Christ's [10 name] is who God says His Son is.

Mt 6:25-26

8. When we doubt our Heavenly Father's love for us, or either His ability or willingness to provide for our needs, we [22 shouldn't] expect Him to answer our prayers.

\* **Condition #4—Love**

[Verse 23b]

Lk 6:27; 6:32-35

9. God answers the prayers of those who are the walking embodiment of [10 love]—like His Son.

\* **Condition #5—Abiding**

[Verse 24a]

I Jn 2:6, 10, 24, 27; 3:6, 9

10. “*Abide*” refers to remaining, but it also connotes a settling-in; our hearts dwell, and feel at [10 home], in our relationship with Christ.

Eph 3:16-17; Jn 15:7; Psa 37:4

\* **Condition #6—Yieldedness**

[Verse 24b]

11. The Holy Spirit indwells and works in the hearts of God's children; those who yield to the Spirit produce the [12 fruit] of the Spirit.

Rom 8:15; Gal 5:22-23; Jn 11:42

12. God answers Christians' prayers if their hearts are yielded to Him; Christians who are yielded to Holy Spirit seek God's will [8 not] their own.