**Abandon of Self**

**Preached by**: Matthew S. Black

**Text**: 1 John 5:14-15, various other passages

**Series**: Effective Prayer

 **Date**: January 1, 2012, 10:30am

**Living Hope Bible Church of Roselle, IL**

**Introduction**: Open your Bibles to 1 John 5:14-15. Scripture indicates a number of considerations that need to be taken into account if we would offer the kind of prayer that God desires from us.

The first is a total abandon of self. Calvin said, “The heart is an idol making factory. You cannot trust yourself.

Paul said in **Romans 7:18**, “For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.”

He said again in **Galatians 2:20**, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” We must abandon self and pray according to God’s will. We must go to the tomb. We must go to our own funerals. The tomb always becomes a womb.

Jesus said, in **Matthew 16:24–26** (ESV) — “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. 26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?”

Therefore, all prayer must be in a state of abandon of self.

Jonathan Edwards writes much of this in his journals. Listen to his entry of August 23, 1742, “*Had a sweet season in secret prayer: the Lord drew near to my soul, and filled me with peace and divine consolation. O my soul tasted the sweetness of the upper world; and was drawn out in prayer for the world, that it might come home to Christ! Had much comfort in the thoughts and hopes of the ingathering of the heathen; was greatly assisted in intercession for Christian friends.*”

We must be abandoned to God and strangers and pilgrims in this world. We have no will of our own, but be utter vessels of God.

**Psalms 37:4-6**, “Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. 5 Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act. 6 He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.”

**1. Praying According to God’s Will.**

* John tells us, “And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him” (**1 John 5:14–15**).
* Jesus teaches us to pray, “Your will be done” (**Matt. 6:10**), and he himself gives us an example, by praying in the garden of Gethsemane, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will” (**Matt. 26:39**).

But how do we know what God’s will is when we pray? If the matter we are praying about is covered in a passage of Scripture in which God gives us a command or a direct declaration of his will, then the answer to this question is easy:

**God’s will is that his Word be obeyed and that his commands be guarded in our lives.**

**Seek Perfect obedience to God’s moral will**

We ought to thirst for entire sanctification. We will have far more time – eons and eternities longer in entirely sanctified bodies, than in our present body. We ought to imagine that life often and seek to live it out here on earth.

We are to seek for perfect obedience to God’s moral will on earth so that God’s will may be done “on earth as it is in heaven” (**Matt. 6:10**). God’s will is accomplished perfectly in the heavenly realm, and His Kingdom has already come there. But we must pray that His kingdom would come here on earth, and that His will would be done in us and through us here on earth as it is done perfectly in heaven.

* **Psalm 139:22–24** (ESV) — “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! 24 And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!”

We must have no will of our own, but God’s! How can we know God’s will?

**Scripture knowledge with a submitted Heart**

For this reason knowledge of Scripture is a tremendous help in prayer, enabling us to follow the pattern of the first Christians who quoted Scripture when they prayed that we studied recently (see **Acts 4:25–26**).

**When you Hit a Fountain, whatever’s inside bursts out. Are you filled with Scripture? Are you controlled by Christ and His Spirit?**

The regular reading and memorization of Scripture, cultivated over many years of a Christian’s life, will increase the depth, power, and wisdom of his or her prayers. Jesus encourages us to have his words within us as we pray, for he says, “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” (**John 15:7**).

This means, for example, that if we are seeking wisdom in the making of an important decision, we do not have to wonder whether it is God’s will that we receive wisdom to act rightly. Scripture has already settled that question for us, because there is a promise of Scripture that applies:

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways” (**James 1:5–8**).

We should have great confidence that God will answer our prayer when we ask him for something that accords with a specific promise or command of Scripture like this. In such cases, we know what God’s will is, because he has told us, and we simply need to pray believing that he will answer.

**What About Unclear Situations?**

However, there are many other situations in life where we do not know what God’s will is. We may not be sure, because no promise or command of Scripture applies, whether it is God’s will that

* **we get the job we have applied for**, or
* win an athletic contest in which we are participating (a common prayer among children, especially), or
* be chosen to hold office in the church,
* even for healing
* and so on.

We often must admit that we simply do not know what God’s will is. In such cases, we should ask him for deeper understanding and then pray for what seems best to us, giving reasons to the Lord why, in our present understanding of the situation, what we are praying for seems to be best. But it is always right to add, either explicitly or at least in the attitude of our heart, “Nevertheless, if I am wrong in asking this, and if this is not pleasing to you, then do as seems best in your sight,” or, more simply, “If it is your will.” Sometimes God will grant what we have asked. Sometimes he will give us deeper understanding or change our hearts so that we are led to ask something differently. Sometimes he will not grant our request at all but will simply indicate to us that we must submit to his will (see 2 Cor. 12:9–10).

**Seek the Kingdom**

Matthew 6:33 (ESV) — “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” We should always pray for God to do what best benefit’s His kingdom. This is when our prayers get to the place they ought to be. Desperate prayers. Prayers that do not look for self interest, but for God’s glory.

**Always Listen to God – not just talking!**

Even when a command or promise of Scripture applies, there may be nuances of application that we do not at first fully understand. Therefore it is important in our prayer that we not only talk to God but also listen to him. We should frequently bring a request to God and then wait silently before him. In those times of waiting on the Lord (Pss. 27:14; 38:15; 130:5–6), God may change the desires of our heart, give us additional insight into the situation we are praying about, grant us additional insight into his Word, bring a passage of Scripture to mind that would enable us to pray more effectively, impart a sense of assurance of what his will is, or greatly increase our faith so that we are able to pray with much more confidence.