

# Praying with Power

## I John 5:14-15, Matthew 21:22 and Hebrews 11:1

*How Reasoning with God Increases Faith and Leads to Great Power in Prayer*

---

### *Introduction:*

---

**Topical Message Today – We normally practice expositional preaching...**

**I Will Call On Him** – Last Sunday we launched a call to prayer as a church. From now through Easter we are meeting on Tuesday nights at 7 pm as we have come aside for a time of seeking the Lord. We certainly sensed that God met us in a personal and powerful way at our first meeting. This call to prayer also includes a few messages on prayer.

### **Reasoning with God**

---

*Do you ever find that you have this important request to bring before God and you come and you put it out there and 20 seconds later you're done. You know that you should not just fill the air with words and that God has told us that he want hear us just because we are long winded in prayer, or eloquent, and certainly we know that repeating the same phrase over and over is contrary to God's will. But at the same time it seems that we are missing something. What is on our hearts is not being adequately communicated. We know from the course of normal human conversation that relationship involves more. Is it because we know before we go that God already knows everything and he knows what we want. In fact, when we dwell on that fact we can find ourselves asking, 'why do I pray anyway?' And then we remember that prayer changes things! God answers prayer. How do we fill the gap, then, between what is in our hearts and the small offering of prayer that comes out without being a hypocrite or a windbag?!*

*Today we want to take some time to expand our understanding of prayer. Have you ever argued with God? Have you ever reasoned out your request before God? In part, this is how we pour our hearts out to God. This is where the substance of our prayer should come from. Today we want to talk about to expand the content of your prayer in a way that will both increase faith and expand your experience. Why is this necessary and why is it advisable? Because in prayer and reasoning with God we change our minds and hearts. That's right: usually we argue with others to change their minds. But we reason with God so that we will more fully understand why what we are asking for should be given to us by God.*

## ***The Interaction of Faith and Prayer***

---

*Let's begin by asking a couple of questions: How does prayer increase faith? And then, how does faith increase the effectiveness of prayer?*

*We notice immediately that I am implying that faith and prayer interact – they act upon one another.*

## ***Second Question – Regarding Experience***

---

*What role does prayer play in experiencing God? How can prayer help me to experience God?*

*Here I want to imply that the interchange between prayer and faith is experienced and that it is relational and that as your prayer and your faith interact that you experience it, you actually experience God. Perhaps we could say it like this – that often the transition from unbelief, or at least functional unbelief, is dynamic. We are more alive and more filled with God at that “aha” moment than at any other time.*

### ***1. Faith is the key to power in prayer***

#### ***Matthew 21:22 ESV***

***22 And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.”***

*Faith is one component, one part, of powerful prayer. There are other parts. Some of them are positive and some are negative. There are a number of positive elements to effective praying, things that enhance prayer:*

- *Praying according to the will of God, for example*
- *A grateful heart – we are often told in scripture to always give thanks when praying to God – we do not come before God grumbling, but giving thanks*

*And there are a number of negative elements to effective praying, things that hinder prayer:*

- *Unforgiveness, for example*
- *Or disobedience to God*

### ***Illustration of riding a bike:***

---

*The negative elements are a little like trying to ride a bike with no air in the tires. The positive are like having good strong legs to drive the bike forward.*

### **Illustration of golf swing:**

---

*I am not saying that faith is the only thing that matters in prayer. There are many parts to praying well. Instead, faith is the key to power in prayer. There are many parts to the golf swing, but you will often hear players and teachers alike talk about keys to power, keys to hitting the ball longer. One might say the cocking of your wrist, or another the turn of your hips, or it is in the legs. But there are other important elements in the golf swing, and just to be clear let's not think that prayer is only a matter of faith. However, more than any other element, it is most directly related to power.*

*Whatever you ask in prayer... you will receive... if you have faith! You will receive if you have faith. That is all about asking and receiving and that is power in prayer.*

**Do you find that your prayer does not bring change? You do not receive what you ask for? Then the place to begin in addressing your situation is do you believe?** *Do you believe in God? Do you believe that God answers prayer? Has unbelief taken over? Maybe you suffer from a **practical unbelief** – in theory you have faith in God but when it comes down to God working in you day to day life you don't believe. Or maybe you suffer from **personal unbelief** – you believe that God works, just not for you. Or maybe you suffer from **present unbelief** – you believe God for yesterday (forgiving old sins and washing you of your past) and you believe God for the future (one day he will save me and I will live forever with him) but you have no faith for today.*

**I Will Call On Him** – *Whatever the nature of your unbelief, the fact is that faith is the key to power with God. Remember Psalm 116:1-2, Because he has heard my voice... I will call on him as long as I live.*

### **An Important Reminder and Clarification**

---

*The foundation for all prayer and for all answer to prayer is the grace of God.*

#### **Hebrews 4:16 ESV**

***16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.***

*God's throne, for the Christian, is a throne of grace. And just in case you were uncomfortable with this whole idea of asking and receiving, well then notice that at this throne we receive mercy and find grace. And when, well when you need it most, in the time of need, which for most of us is just about all the time.*

*Grace is the foundation. And yet on so many fronts we are reminded that faith is key whenever we ask of God. We want to take these scriptures seriously and to wrestle with their application in our lives! For example:*

**James 1:5-8 ESV**

***5 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.***

**Faith is the Key to Power in Prayer!**

**2. Faith is Assurance and Conviction**

So now we must think for a moment about “what is faith?” and “how does faith work?” In doing so we will gain some insight into how to get faith and how to put it to work in our lives.

**Hebrews 11:1 ESV**

***1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.***

*Faith is assurance; faith is conviction.*

**What we have here in Hebrews 11:1 is a practical definition of faith.** It is not comprehensive, but it looks at faith at **the point of connection** between us and what we are seeking. We don't have it yet, but we have assurance that it is ours; we don't have it yet, but we have conviction that we will.

A few verses later the author explains a little more where he gives another definition of faith, one where he goes a bit deeper to show us that the object of our faith is God.

**Hebrews 11:6 ESV**

***6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.***

*In verse 1 I am hoping for something; this something is not seen, but I am sure and I have a conviction. This is not some wishful thinking. There is certainty about it.*

*Confidence is another word. I am confident! My confidence is in God.*

*But verse 1 we discover is assuming all that is in verse 6. My faith is in God. I cannot even get started without God. He is who I am believing in. My confidence is in him. I know that he exists and that he is all powerful and that when I seek him and ask from him he does good things – he rewards and does not punish those who seek him. Practically I am asking God and seeking God for eternal life, for the*

*forgiveness of sin, to know him, and many more things that I am asking in prayer. Faith, on this practical level, is assurance of what I am hoping for. Faith is conviction that what I cannot see is mine.*

**Salvation Call:** *Now when we frame it in terms of salvation – salvation and eternal life is what I am hoping for, then we can ask ourselves, do I have assurance that this is mine, do I have conviction. That is practical faith. And that is what we want to employ in prayer.*

**Summary: Faith stands on the foundation of who God is – it is in confident in God. Upon this steady footing faith practically is assurance and conviction.**

***Question: What we have said to this point about the nature of faith needs some explaining.***

*We have to ask ourselves, is Jesus really saying in Matthew 21:22 that we can ask for anything and as long as we have assurance then it is ours? Can I just ask for a million dollars and if I am sure that God will give it to me then he will give it to me?*

**Matthew 21:22 ESV**

***22 And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.”***

*Whatever? Does Jesus really mean whatever?*

*Well, there is a context to this verse and time permitting we will explain more, but for now we need to round out what we are talking about. Faith is confidence in God and practically it is assurance that you have received what you have asked for. So, assurance stands on this platform of God and who he is and what he will do. You cannot have a God based assurance for something that is not in the will of God. You can never be sure that God will do something that is contrary to his nature and will.*

**So now we come to a point that helps us bring it together in a helpful way. How do I know what is meant by whatever here? And how do I gain the Spirit given assurance of faith?**

### **3. Faith Reasons with God**

*1 John 5:14-15 tells us the same thing we have been saying in a little different way, but essentially it is the same thing.*

**1 John 5:14-15 ESV**

***14 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.***

Again we have this element of assurance. Except here it is described as a part of a process.

- a. *If I know that I ask according to his will*
- b. *Then I know that he hears me*
- c. *And then I know that I have received whatever I have asked for*

*Faith is the assurance of things hoped for. I am sure. I have conviction.*

*He uses the word here in 1 John that we have confidence. Remember that we said that faith is confidence in God. We have this assurance, conviction, which is a confidence in God himself!*

**But do I know? Do I know this is God's will? Surely you do not think this is as simple as we read something in the bible and we conclude that it is God's will and there it is, we have it. Oh that we had that kind of faith. Because we are not sure, as we should be, that God will do what we read to be his will.**

**I am asking this very important question: how do I know that this is God's will, that this thing I am asking for is the will of God. I cannot convince myself. It does not come with me saying words and confessing things that I don't already believe. I cannot work it up emotionally. Praying louder or longer or more eloquently will not produce it.**

**It comes from God. The Holy Spirit gives me assurance. He enlivens God's word and promises in my heart and they come alive - their creative power and energy are personalized in my life. This is a work of the Spirit of God.**

### ***Arguing with God (Reasoning with God)***

*So let's not drop off into a fatalistic response and say 'the Holy Spirit produces this assurance and so I will just do nothing and see if it comes.'*

*We know that the Holy Spirit does his work in us and through us. We are not in this case passive. We are active. And this is why I said that this has something to do with our experience with God and in God.*

*When I go to pray I want to think about why what I am asking for is the will of God. And I am telling God why I think this is his will. I am reasoning with God. I am presenting, if you will, an argument. I am presenting my case.*

*I do this, not to convince God. I do this, not to change God's mind, but to change my mind. As I reason this out with God I become convinced through the dynamic and comforting ministry of the Holy Spirit. I*

bring before God scripture and biblical arguments as to why this request is his will and the result is that faith rises in my own heart.

J.I. Packer puts it in the following manner:

*The Puritans used to speak rather grandly about using argument in prayer. By this they did not mean pressing God to fall in line with our own desires (“My will be done”); what they meant was telling God why what we have asked for seems to us to be for the best, in light of what we know God’s own goals to be (generating good, saving sinners, extending the kingdom and enriching the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and glorifying himself by so revealing his transcendent triune glory that his rational creatures give him glory by their thanks and praise).*

Or consider Puritan Stephen Charnock:

*Our praying. . . should consist of arguments for God’s glory and our happiness: not that arguments move God to do that which he is not willing of himself to do for us . . . as though the infinitely wise God needed information, or the infinitely loving God needed persuasion, but it is for strengthening our faith in him. All the prayers in the Scripture you will find to be reasoning with God, not a multitude of words heaped together; and the design of the promises is to furnish us with a strength of reason...*

If you are familiar with the Westminster Larger Catechism then you know that it takes each request in the Lord’s Prayer, the model prayer, and asks and answers questions to highlight what each phrase teaches. In regards to the very last phrase, the conclusion of the Lord’s Prayer, it reads:

**Q. 196. What doth the conclusion of the Lord’s prayer teach us?**

**A. The conclusion of the Lord’s prayer, (which is, For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.) teacheth us to enforce our petitions with arguments, which are to be taken, not from any worthiness in ourselves, or in any other creature, but from God; and with our prayers to join praises, ascribing to God alone eternal sovereignty, omnipotency, and glorious excellency; in regard whereof, as he is able and willing to help us, so we **by faith****

are emboldened *to plead with him that he would, and quietly to rely upon him, that he will fulfil our requests. And, to testify this our desire and assurance, we say, Amen.*

#### **Four Arguments:**

*So, let's examine four arguments to take to God for the purpose of adding boldness to our faith as the Holy Spirit gives aid:*

- 1. The Glory of God*
- 2. We are in Covenant with God*
- 3. The Attributes of God*
- 4. Specific Promises*

#### **Conclusion:**

*Come let us reason together! This strategy in prayer can help us:*

- 1. Pray more powerfully*
- 2. Pray with substance*
- 3. To experience God beyond our present experience*