

Abide in Me: A Promised Privilege

John 15:7

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TRANSCRIPT:

Let us turn to John 15 this morning. I'd like us to consider verse number seven. John chapter 15, we'll read from verse one through to verse eight. "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."

As we're coming to a close in our series on John chapter 15, we have considered this fruitful vine, the Lord Jesus, who the Bible teaches is the true vine, the vine of God's redemptive purpose, the vine by which all who believe in Him are joined, and those that are joined to Him know His life and know the fruit that comes from being united with the vine. We considered that this fruit is not just necessarily the conversion of souls, nor is it just simply fruit that has no external expression, but we saw that it is really the effective practice of true religion in the life of a believer as they so commune with their Savior. We looked at how the vine and the branches, yes, they are joined, but they must be more than just their union; that union must be experienced by their communing, and that therefore the Bible teaches us that we are to abide in Him, simply meaning to rest in Him, or to dwell in Him, to basically depend upon Him in such a way that we are communing and drawing from His life into our own. And we saw the importance last week of why it is that we as believers are to abide in Him. Why should we abide in Him? Is there any other way? Well, Jesus answers that question in verses 4 and 5 with two "cannots," saying that without Me you can do nothing, that the only way for you to bear fruit, therefore, is to abide. The

only vine that you can abide in in order to bear fruit is the true vine, and what we see is the fruit that we will bear will be true Christlikeness that will make us effective in our service for Jesus Christ and in the life that we live.

And up until this point, perhaps we've been thinking, well, that sounds great, but how does this benefit us as the branches? We've been talking about God's pruning work, we've been talking about abiding in Christ, and that we can do nothing without Him, and we've been talking about, in one sense, it may cause some of us to maybe think to ourselves, what's God trying to do? Is He trying to kill our joy? Is He trying to rob us of our pleasures? Is He seeking to tell us that we can do nothing, that we need Him, we need Him, we need Him? You know, the strength of man is in the fact that he can do what he wants when he wants. Well, that's worldly philosophy, and that's not biblical Christianity. But is God trying to rob us of some pleasure or to kill our joy? Well, the Bible itself, in this same passage, tells us exactly the otherwise. Look at what it says in verse number 11 of this text: "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy may be full." The whole purpose of this text, yes, is for the glory of God, as we'll consider next week—by this shall My Father be glorified, that you bear much fruit—but it is not only for the glory of God, but it is also for the joy of the branches. And Jesus is teaching us that there is a joy in the world that is far less than My joy, and He goes, "But My joy, I want it to remain in you, and therefore that will make your joy full." And so, Jesus is not trying to rob us of joy; in fact, He's helping us to enter into a life of complete, true satisfaction as we, as the branches, experience the life of Christ within us. And so, it's a wrong kind of thinking.

In fact, the text that we're looking at today teaches us of one of the greatest privileges of abiding in Christ. This is all in the context of our friendship with God, and this is important for us to realize. Look at verse number 7, says the text that we're going to consider this morning: "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you." Jesus here teaches His disciples of one of the greatest privileges of the Christian life, and that is not just prayer, that is effective praying. And I want to distinguish between the two because there's a difference between praying and effective praying. Jesus says that if you abide in Me and My words abide in you, you'll pray effectively. And although every Christian has entered into a life of prayer—without prayer, you do not know God—but there is a way in which the Christian people can come to know God in such a way and have such an effective prayer life with God that this very text of Scripture becomes true in their experience. This is the privilege that God has for His people that abide in Him. And look at what the promise is in this text of Scripture and how plainly it is stated by our Lord: "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what

you desire, and it will be done for you, or it shall be done for you." This is not one statement in Scripture that Jesus says that we can simply explain away. Look at John chapter 14 with me, just over in the next page, next page in your Bibles, on verse 13. There Jesus says in John 14:13, "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it." Look at John chapter number 16, verse number 23. In this one discourse, Jesus has repeatedly said something to this effect. Look what He says here in verse 23 of chapter 16: "And in that day you ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give you." And then in John chapter 15, verse number 16, Jesus also says something to the same effect. He said, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, and whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give you."

What is important for us to realize is that this text is a promise that Christ is making to His disciples, and the purpose of this promise is that Jesus is trying to help them and intend for them to have a strong confidence, if I could say, in their prayer lives. He wants His disciples to realize there was a time in which you asked Me everything because I was with you, but as I go to My Father, if you ask the Father in My name, He will answer you just as I answered you when I was with you. In one sense, what He's simply saying is, "I want you to realize that the privilege of having one by you who hears you and answers you is not only there in the physical reality that existed with us in the three and a half years that I was with you. This privilege is to last for your entire Christian experience. This is a privilege of the believer." And it is important for us when we come to texts like this to let them say what they say and not try to make them say anything else that they do not say.

And why I'm saying this is that it is important to realize that there are conditions here that the Lord lays down for this to be true, but the truth itself is true, that there is a privilege of the Christian where he may walk with God and he may fellowship with God, and she may fellowship with God, and know God and walk with God in such a way that she may ask or he may ask whatsoever she desires or he desires, and He will do it. This is what the text says. This is what Jesus wanted His disciples to have, a strong confidence in their prayer lives, to pray in a way that prevails, if we could put it that way. That prayer is a sort of engagement in warfare. When we pray, we're wrestling not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers, and there are things working against that which we are praying for. But Jesus is teaching us that we may pray in such a way so as to obtain the things that we pray for. And that's meant to be the privilege of the godly. This is the privilege of the godly, as expressed throughout the entire Scripture. The summary of Scripture on prayer could be seen in

Psalm 34:15, where it says, "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry." Something here that is telling us that there is a distinctive reality or distinctive truth or manifestation in the prayer life of the godly, that it is clear that God's ears are open to them, not like His ears are closed to the wicked. It's open to the godly, and His ears are open to their cry. He looks at them, He hears them, and He helps them. You can go through all the Psalms and see that this is all through Scripture.

We've got Moses himself, who was a man who interceded for God's people, and you see how he even prevailed in prayer with God in there in the wilderness. You see Hannah, who is pleading with God for a child, and we see how her prayer prevailed before the Lord, and that she poured out her soul unto God, and God heard her cry, and God answered her. We see the prophet Elijah, a man who was mighty in prayer, but the Bible teaches us that he was a man just like us, in case we get any strange ideas that he was someone different to us. He was just like us, a man of like passions, had his struggles—one day victory on the Mount of Carmel, the next day hiding in a cave, saying, "I rather die because this woman has threatened to take my life." You know, this is the reality of the weakness of man, but even the weakness of man can prevail with God in prayer. And this same Elijah, who called down fire from heaven via prayer and God answered him, he also prayed that it may not rain, and it didn't rain for a period of time there. And James comments on this, and there's a translation—one translator translates the text this way in James 5:16—he says, "The prayer of a righteous man has great power to prevail," or "the prayer of a righteous man avails much," or "it has great power to prevail." And in the Bible, time and time again, we see this, not only Old Testament, in the New Testament, where the disciples of Jesus Christ, whenever they were wrought with a problem in their lives, they besought the throne of grace. In Acts chapter 4, for example, and the Lord answered their prayer, and the Lord blessed them with an answer from heaven, power from heaven, wisdom from God, to see God's hand at work. In fact, there was nothing in the early church that drove them away from prayer. In fact, all their troubles drove them to prayer. Peter gets arrested, thrown into prison. The Bible clearly states that the church, the church of God, was constant in prayer for him, constant prayer. It says, "But constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church." And as they were praying, God was moving, and God was answering, and Peter gets delivered by an angel of the Lord out of prison and starts knocking on their door.

And so, what I'm simply trying to say is that what we see in Scripture is that the believers in Jesus Christ had a strong confidence in their prayer life. In fact, this was the confidence of the Lord Jesus Christ when it was Lazarus who died, and He loved him, and He wept, obviously, over him. But listen to what Jesus says about His relationship to the Father, His communion with

the Father, and how it resulted in effective prayer for Jesus. Look what He says here: "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me." Jesus, in perfect communion with the Father, united to Him in a way different to us, but nonetheless, perfect communion, set forth as an example for us, had strong confidence in His Father hearing His prayer. And this is meant to be our privilege.

But the failure in our day to obtain what we ask for often causes us to shift the responsibility from us to God. Isn't that right? We look at failed prayer or failure to obtain that which we ask for, and the last thing we do is look at us. We cast it into the lap of God and we put everything into the fact, "Well, God will just do what He wants to do." And that's true, God will do what He wants to do; there's no doubt about that. But we cast it into the lap of God and basically not look in and ask ourselves, "Hang on a minute, was I praying as I ought to pray?" You see, the Bible doesn't cast the failed prayers of God's people into the lap of God. The Bible consistently causes us to self-examine. Self-examination in light of failed prayer, for example, in James chapter number four, he says, "You have not because you ask not." He says, "You have not not because God is not willing to give, but you have not because you ask not." And he says, "When you ask, you ask amiss, or you ask in a way that you might consume it upon your lusts. You ask not according to His will; therefore, you don't have what you also ask for." So he's saying, "You don't have because you don't ask." He says, "But when you ask, you don't ask according to His will, and therefore you don't have what you ask for." What's James doing? He's saying, "Don't put what seems to be God not answering our prayers on God. You need to turn the finger on yourself and ask yourself, 'What have I been doing that's not right?'"

The Bible speaks about our lack of persistence, which Jesus gives two parables in the Gospel of Luke to show that if we persist, if we ask, we seek, and we knock, that God will answer. In fact, what we read today this morning shows us that we must have faith in God, and that faith in God must precede our praying because if we ask anything in His name, believing that He will do it, He will give it to us. And now, although there are many mysteries to prayer and there are many unanswered questions to the issues of prayer, what becomes clear and true is this: that God is presented in Scripture as one who delights to hear the prayers of the godly, who wants to answer those prayers, who calls us to pray, and He is ready to give. There is not anything in Scripture that shows a reluctance on the part of God. It doesn't present God as reluctant; it doesn't present God as one who cannot be believed; it doesn't present prayer as something that most regularly fails but from time to time it works. It doesn't present prayer that way. The Bible presents prayer differently to that, that prayer does work, and that God does work through means of praying, and that there is a strong confi-

dence that we as God's people are to have in our praying. Hebrews puts it like this: we are to come boldly to the throne of grace, and that is because Jesus Christ has died, we have access to that throne, we have an anchor that keeps our soul, and we can come to God in Jesus' name, according to His will, and we can come with strong confidence that He is the God that the Scripture says He is, and we may pray as we ought.

And this is important for us to remember if we fall into some kind of slump in our prayer lives whereby we just think, "Look, we're going to leave it all up to God, and we'll just say things here and there when we get into trouble," we will never learn to prevail in prayer. And Jesus is teaching His disciples not just to have a kind of praying that is simply like, "Throw it in the lap of God and then just forget about it." He wants them to learn how to commune with God in prayer and to have their hearts aligned with God, to commune, fellowship, to share in such a way that whatever they ask, whatever they desire, they may ask, and God will grant it.

Now, if I stop the sermon here, you might have the idea or inkling that I'm thinking, trying to tell you that God is some kind of genie, that you know, you have your wishes, and He's bound to answer that which we ask. But that would be a failure if we ended the sermon here. We must look at the first part of the text because Jesus lays conditions for such praying. Such praying is such praying; it is such confidence and assurance we can have with God. But look at the conditions that preceded. Look at it says in verse number seven of this text: "This is it: if you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you." These are necessary conditions of effective praying. Yes, there is such a thing as effective praying. Yes, there is such a thing as prevailing in prayer. Yes, there is such a thing as asking what you desire, and it shall be done for you. But Jesus lays down here some necessary conditions, and He uses the word "if," which is a word we don't like in the Bible too often because it sets before us a kind of wall or a kind of barrier or a kind of hurdle that we need to cross, a kind of, if I could say, Jordan River or a Red Sea that confronts us, a difficulty. It's not just as simple as asking whatever you want, and it shall be done for you. Jesus says, "If you abide in Me, if My words abide in you, then go ahead, then go ahead and ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you."

Whenever we see the words "if" in Scripture, it should call our attention, as it sets between us a desired end and set between our desired end is a sort of difficulty by the word "if," a sort of condition, a sort of something that we should be looking to, a potential difficulty that we must face. It requires a bit of diligence, self-sacrifice, cries a little bit of self-denial, requires a life of dependence upon the vine. Look at the first condition that Jesus lays out here. He says, "If you abide in Me and My words abide in

you," He says, "If you abide in Me." We've been going through this several weeks ago, so I won't spend time elaborating too much here, but what it simply means is if you maintain and remain in constant communion with Me by clinging to Me, by trusting in Me for in all things and for all things, you may ask whatever you desire, and it shall be given for you. If you live a life of utter dependence upon Me, if you live a life of rich fellowship and communion with Me, if you live a life that is convinced by the reality that without Me you can do nothing, if you're looking to Me and drawing from Me, and I like a branch that is completely dependent upon Me for your life, for your sustenance, for your breath, He says, "You may ask whatever you desire, and it shall be done for you." If Jesus prioritizes in light of this great privilege of prayer, He prioritizes the main argument of His entire analogy, which is this: you must abide in Me. You cannot have a fruitful prayer life unless there is sweet, constant fellowship and communion with God, which means anything that threatens the communion with God must go so that when you come to God in prayer, there is an openness, if I could say, a boldness, an assurance that I am not plagued by sin, my heart is not given over to that which is lustful, but I really want the Lord, and I love Him. Communion with God, fellowship with God, is a vital condition for effective praying. This is not like someone who doesn't know God saying, "Oh God, I need you today, can you just help me out?" Jesus says, "No, effective praying is conditioned upon you being My friend. You got to walk with Me, you got to talk with Me, you got to tell Me that you are Mine and I am yours, and sharing the joy and the fellowship that is between us."

How much of our praying today is just simply like we don't visit God in prayer all week long, something goes wrong, all of a sudden we turn on the switch. What do we do here? Pray, yes, pray, that's right, that's right, that must be the secret. No, it's not a magic charm. Prayer is part of our communing with God, as part of our fellowship with God. It rises in our heart that is befriending God. It is not just something that we use as a spare tire, if I could say. I think it's quite a mission. It's like the steering wheel. You know, we don't need God just when we're in trouble. We need Him every hour, most gracious Lord. No tender voice like Thine can peace afford. It's the heart that communes with God. This is, "If you have that heart with Me, you ask Me whatever you desire, and it will be done for you."

Secondly, the second condition which I want to spend a little bit more time thinking about this morning is found in verse number seven as well. "If you abide in Me, and," He says, "My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you." This expression, "My words abide in you," sounds very similar, doesn't it, to what we've seen previously in "If you abide in Me, and I abide in you," and in verse number five, it says also the same thing, "He that abides in Me, and I in him." And so, we have in Scripture us abiding in the vine, but we also have Christ abiding in us, and

we looked at that as we looked at the abiding life. But beyond this, what now Jesus elaborates here is, if I could say, a little practical application of what it looks like to have Christ abiding in us. It's a little bit more practical when it comes to this issue of prayer. Christ abiding in me, what does that look like? Well, He goes to one practical application of that, and this is the practical application He gives: "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you."

I want you to pay attention to My words, My sayings, My utterances. What I have been teaching you, says Jesus, is not in vain. What I have been teaching you is meant to govern you. What I have been teaching you is meant to shape you. What I have been teaching you is meant to be your own. And what Jesus is saying to His disciples here, "I have made some promises to you. I have given you some instructions. I have given you some revelation of Myself, who I am, where I have come from, where I am going, My mission, My purpose, My gospel. I have outlaid all this to you, and I've told you promises and promises and promises, and I've said to you, 'Do this, and don't do that. Keep My commandments. Love your neighbor as yourself.' I have given to you the great sermon on the mount, whereby you must be poor in spirit, broken in heart." And you can go through all the gospels and listen to the sayings of Jesus. He says, "I've been speaking to you for a long time, but I don't want My sayings to not have place in your heart. I want My sayings to deeply and richly abide in your life. I want you to believe everything that I have said about Myself to you. I told you, Philip, that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me, and if you see Me, you've seen the Father. But do you believe this, Philip? I have told you, O disciples, have faith in God. Yes, I know there's storms at sea, but even though I'm sleeping, I'm still watching. I have told you to not be of little faith. I have shown you the way of the promise that My Father will send the Comforter. I have told you that if you pray, I will answer you. I have shared these things with you, and I have instructed you in the way that you should go." He says, "And I want My sayings and My words to abide in you."

What it looks like in a practical way to have Jesus abiding in us is to have His word richly dwelling in us. Colossians 3:16 says this, that the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom. And what the Bible is teaching us here, what Jesus is saying to His disciples here, "I want My words to be not words that are just not that are falling on deaf ears. I want them to be your very life and breath and your bread." I want you to receive My words. It's probably a better way to put it, to receive My sayings in such a way that My sayings infiltrate your entire soul.

This can be illustrated in the idea of leaven. A woman or a man may bake some bread—Natalie used to do the sourdough; I was hopeless at it—make some bread, and you would put the starter or the leaven inside there, or if

you make it with yeast or whoever, there's different leavening agents. But the point is this: whatever leaven is mixed through the dough, that leaven finds its way into every corner of that bread, so that if you bite the corner of the bread or the middle of the bread or the other end of the bread, you will taste, you should taste the sourdough. You should taste the fermentation. What has happened is that which has entered in as a little seed, if we could say, has spread throughout the whole, so that the whole is entirely taken up by that which was planted inside. And what Jesus is saying is this: "I have taught you. I have planted words in your hearing. You have seen Me. You have heard of Me. I've told you who I am, and I want My words and My sayings to be penetrating your very entire soul and being. I want them to be filled with your mind. I want you to, when you're confronted with a problem, reference in your heart and mind what I told you that day two years ago, what I told you that day six months ago. Next time you're troubled with a difficulty, remember what I did in the breaking of bread. Next time you're struggling with a situation, remember who I am, that I am the one that comforts you. And next time you think, 'Is there any hope?' remember that I'm coming again to receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." And you can go through all the Scriptures, and Jesus is saying, "I want you to know this, and I want this word to penetrate your life in such a way that it is welcomed and fills every part of you. I want the word to reside in you as a welcome guest, spreading throughout your entire life, filling every part, so that when you come to think, you think about the things that I told you. When you come to act, you act the way I told you to act. Your thoughts, your words, your deeds, your judgment have all been shaped by My words. And Jesus says to His disciples, "If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, go ahead, ask whatever you desire."

Let's think about that for a moment. What is Jesus teaching His disciples? And what He's teaching them is this: if My sayings become yours, your sayings will become Mine. What He's simply trying to say to them is simply this: if you meet the conditions of utter dependence and communion with Me, and your word, My word, possesses you and takes up your thoughts, your mind, your will, your heart, He's simply saying your will will be broken, and My word will guide your will. It will guide your thoughts. It will guide your mind. So when you speak, you will pray in a way that is consistent with My will. And so, what He's saying is your desires will be like Mine.

This is what He's been trying to say to His disciples: you abide in Me, My life comes into you, your life to Mine, we share as of the life, I'm ministering to you, and you're ministering unto Me, and we're communing together, we're talking to one another, we're fellowship with another, and now the word of God starts to fill your life and fill your mind and become your meditation, and your whole being is shaped by My word. He says, "You meet those conditions, go ahead, you ask, and guess what? You have what you ask for."

You will have what you ask for." In one sense, you have the mind of Christ.

Now, I'm not simply saying that we can perfect this, this side of eternity, but nonetheless, this is our strong confidence that if we walk with the Lord and His word has an abiding place in our hearts, we can come to Him in assurance of faith that God will answer our prayers. This is the privilege of the abiding life.

You ask yourself, why don't we see the power of this privilege in our time? Why don't we see these things? Well, we're not abiding as we ought. It was C.H. Spurgeon who said these words: "If you will not hear God's word, He will not hear yours. And if His words do not abide in you, your word shall have no power with Him." You see, if we don't hear God's words, God won't hear ours, and if His words are not abiding in us, we will have no power with Him, in the sense that we will have no none of that power privilege of prayer whereby it's efficacious.

And the reason why perhaps we don't see in our lives the great privilege of effective praying simply comes down to the reality that we do not abide in the vine as we ought. Our dependence is divided. Our heart is set on our own things and not on His. And not only this, we come to the point in our lives where the word of God has very little place, very little priority in our hearts. We give to it our weakest thoughts. Our strongest meditations of our minds go to other things. So often, we're not engaged when we hear it. We don't contemplate on its truths. We don't mull over its realities. We don't... it doesn't inform our actions as it should. It doesn't shape our attitudes, and it doesn't rebuke our waywardness as it ought. We are comfortable. It doesn't comfort our souls when we need to because we find comfort in other things. And what Jesus is telling us is this: you must have My word abiding in you, that it becomes everything to you, so much so that you will experience this privilege that whatever you ask, I will give you.

What desire? What Jesus is telling us: there is a way to pray in vain, and that is when your will is not bent and broken by the word of God. It's a question we have to ask ourselves: is there little power in our praying because there is little shaping of our lives by the word of God and very little dependence upon Him?

The question we have to ask ourselves is: what place does God's word have in our lives? The psalmist, when he talks about the word of God, he says it's sweeter than honey in the honeycomb. He talks about the word of God as being precious to him. It's more precious than of gold, he says, than silver and much fine gold. But if the truth be known, is that how we view the word of God? How much time do we give, and how much does the worldly affairs of this life govern our lives apart from the word? Think about this:

more precious than gold to me, the psalmist is saying. What he's simply saying is the pursuit of money has nothing in comparison with the pursuit of the word of God. But we pursue business, we pursue prosperity, we give our hours and our time and our hearts and our attention and our diligence, and not necessarily wrong, to produce income and to fulfill our part of our calling as humanity is to work and make ends meet and to live a life and to have those things and to enjoy the things God gives us. But how much place is the word of God having comparison to those things? What shapes your life? What shapes your thinking? Is it the work? Is it the money? Or is it the word? The psalmist says it's precious more than gold because the paycheck was not so glittery to him as the word was itself.

You don't understand, Josh, I'm busy working. I have no time for the Bible. My friend, if you have no time for the Bible, God has no time for your praying. You won't have what you ask. Say, "Oh yes, it's sweeter than honey than the honeycomb." But we treat it like we set it aside. We set the word of God aside like it was, you know, like you put a plate of food before someone, and they don't like the asparagus. They put it to the side. They eat everything they love first. The psalmist is saying it's sweet like the honey, more than the honeycomb. You know what he's simply saying is this is the thing that I want to devour first. I want to devour first and cherish and taste and savor all the flavors of the word of God more than anything else. I want that. This is what it means to have the word abiding in us, to have this desire and hunger for it, whereby it fills our life. We pursue it.

Spurgeon, who also said, he saw an ancient book one day. Spurgeon saw an ancient book, and it had a wormhole here, and the worm had eaten all the way through to the back of the book, right through in this ancient book that he found. And he said this, he said, "I want to do the same, right through the Bible. I want to eat this book right through the front, the cover." Essentially what he's saying in our modern experience is simply saying, "The verse of the day won't do. The verse of the day won't do to have the word of God abiding in your life. We must have hunger for God's word, thirst for God's word, want to know it, Genesis to Revelation. Teach me, Lord, teach me Thy word." Read Psalm 119 until God gives you a burning desire for His word that it might indwell you, that you might cherish Him.

Why should we forfeit such a privilege like this? Think about it. How many things in our lives do we want to see God come through and answer the prayer? We have besetting sins. We have trouble in our lives. We have problems in our workplaces. We have problems in our community. We have problems in the church. We desire for God to build His church, that great things will happen for His namesake. We want souls to be saved. We want things to be done and accomplished in our midst. We're praying that God will do things, do things. We want to see Him work in our families, in our

homes, in our lives. We want to be living triumphant Christian lives this side of eternity. We want to taste heaven. And my friends, what Jesus is saying to us, if we want this, we can have this if we come to His word. This is our privilege. We can have effective praying. Those things that we desire can be had in our lives. We can have them if we but have His word and have Him as our communing life.

I know you, but I desire to be used of God in prayer. I want my life to count for something in light of eternity. I mean, however God has willed for that to be, sure, but it will not be effective apart from praying. But I want my life to count. I want my life to count for eternity. I want to see God's omnipotent hand move in our midst, to touch our lives, to change things, to make us more like Himself. And I want such confidence in prayer, as John says in 1 John 5:14-15, "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have desired of Him." Get this: they're the petitions that we desire of Him, but they are according to His will. What's John saying? There is such a life that we can have that we can know God's will. We can pray so in accordance and harmony with the will of God that we feel what He feels, we long for what He longs, His word is so a part of us that we pray as He would have us to pray.

And he says, "This is the confidence that we have in Him." Where's our confidence? Sometimes we go to prayer sheepish. I think it's because we don't know His word, or because we're not communing with Him. But you know, you can trace through the history of the church and find men that commune with God and women that commune with God and that loved His word, pray some very bold prayers that God answered.

Can't help but think of John Knox. He, in the Scottish Reformation, Queen of Scots comes in, and she's—they called her Bloody Mary because she killed so many—she was a Roman Catholic queen, killed so many of the Protestants. But John Knox was a man of prayer, and he was praying, "Praying, Lord, give me Scotland, or I die." What a prayer. Praying for Scotland, for the conversion of a nation. What boldness, what confidence. "Give me Scotland, or I die." His heart was so burdened by it. In fact, his praying was so efficacious that when the Queen of Scots, Mary, knew about John Knox, her commentary concerning him was this: she said, "I fear the prayers of that man more than all the armies of Europe." She knew that he was a man that prevailed with God in prayer in such a way that what he asked, God would most likely supply, and she feared for her life because he asked for Scotland.

What about praying for us? "Lord, give me my family, or I die." What about,

"Lord, give us Camden Valley, or we die." What about, "Lord, give us a soul in our workplace, or we die." "Lord, use us for Your kingdom." What about confidence in prayer like that? Do we have to think about George Mueller? Some people say his prayer life was so effective that there's probably not a man like him since the time of the apostles in terms of answered prayer—fifty thousand answers to prayer. But the man was a man who abided in the word of God. I've heard, I think it was from Ian Paisley, who said of him this, he said, "He began in the book of Genesis and prayed right throughout the Bible." He was a man who communed with God, who shaped his thought life. He said, "I struggled with prayer," Mueller said. "My mind was so captured by other things as I went to the Lord in prayer." He goes, "So what I did was I started to get to the word first, and I started to read the word and meditate on the word and let the word of God dwell in me in that way, and then," he goes, "then I came to prayer, and I found all those things just were much easier. My mind was much clearer to pray to the Lord." George Mueller was a man that saw so much things done for the glory of God, for the kingdom of God. And I'm taking two great examples, if we could say, of prayer in the history of the church, and my friends, but what about us? How we fall in the history of church, God only knows what He has planned for us, but the conditions must be met by us first, that if you abide in Him and His word abides in you, this is the confidence that you can have in Him, that you may ask whatever you desire, and get ready, He will give it to you. What a privilege. May we take much care to make use of it in our lives. Let us pray.