**Lessons from a Lockdown**

**Volume II**

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**Day 80**

**1 John 5:13-15**

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

***Questions for Personal Reflection:***

1. Do I know whether I have eternal life or not? Why?
2. Do I have confidence in approaching God? Am I more confident now than at the start of the pandemic? Why?
3. How do I know if I am asking things from God in accordance with his will?
4. Am I confident that God will answer my prayers? Why, what do I pray for?
5. When asked: "How is your prayer life?" What immediately comes to my mind? Why?

***Insight:***

It is possible for someone to know that he has eternal life. Everyone may hope that they do. But hoping is not the same thing as knowing. Some people know they do and are correct while others think they do but they are mistaken. Others simply don't know. By studying the Bible carefully anyone can know whether they have eternal life or not. Knowing our eternal destiny is something worth finding out about. The Bible is clear on who has and who does not have eternal life. Of course there would always be people who would refuse to believe the Bible. But no one could ever prove that the Bible is not clear on the matter.

This pandemic has given us more opportunities and more reasons to approach God. We approach God when we pray and we read the Bible. As we do it more often, we become confident in approaching God.

When we pray for things in accordance with his will, he hears us. What are we praying for? In the first place, what is the *content* of our prayers? Are we praying for specific things? Are we praying for others or just ourselves? Second, what is the *intent* of our prayers? Do we pray only to fulfill a religious duty or because we want God to hear us? Do we pray to be heard by God or just so that we could feel good about ourselves?

Sometimes we are not confident that God will answer our prayers because there is sin in our lives. We think, "Why would God grant the prayers of an unrighteous person?" True, the Bible does say that the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. But it does not mean that only the sinless can pray, otherwise no one can pray. In fact it can be argued that sinners need to pray more than the righteous. Besides, "righteous" does not mean "sinless." If you are walking in the light, you are righteous. Being righteous means you do not deliberately keep on sinning. Righteousness means confessing our sins and fighting to put an end to it in our lives.

Sometimes we are not confident that God will answer our prayers because of past unanswered prayers. First of all, we may simply be mistaken that our prayers went unanswered. The reality may be that God did answer but only in way we did not expect or notice. Or perhaps God's answer was simply not yet. But even if God says no to our prayers, he must have a reason which if we knew, we would probably agree with. There are also prayers that God will not grant because it will violate free will. For instance, when we pray for a person to become a Christian and that person refused to become a Christian, it does not mean that God said "no" to our prayers. The same thing is true when we pray for a Christian to repent and stay faithful, but they do not. We can pray that God will influence a person or make things happen in their lives so that they will make the right decision. But God will never force a person to a make a decision to be a Christian or to force him to stay faithful or repent. Because God is love, he will give us the right to choose whether we will love him back or not.

All of this does not mean that we should only pray for things we are absolutely sure that God will grant. Our prayers are not just requests. When we pray, we verbalize our thoughts to God. We express to God our deepest longings. Because God already knows our thoughts this is really for our benefit. So the value of prayer is not measured by how much our requests are granted by God. The value of prayer is in how much it connects us to God.

In some ways, we can say that we should live in order to pray and not just pray in order to live. We should live our lives in such a way that we can be confident in our prayers. We should not engage in any activity that can hinder our prayers. Even if something is not sinful, but it can be a distraction or an obstacle to our prayers, we avoid it. Being confident in approaching in God is worth more than all the pleasures that this world has to offer.

The content of our prayers must be in accordance with God's will while the intent of our prayers must be in line with our spiritual needs.