

# Secrets To Answered Prayer

1 John 3:14-24



## Rock Hill Baptist Church

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**FOCAL** 1 John 3:14-24 KJVA We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not [his] brother abideth in death. {15} Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. {16} Hereby perceive we the love [of God], because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down [our] lives for the brethren. {17} But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels [of compassion] from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? {18} My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. {19} And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. {20} For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. {21} Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, [then] have we confidence toward God. {22} And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. {23} And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. {24} And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

### **Introduction**

I was visiting someone at the hospital the other day (something I find myself doing more and more lately) and in the middle of the conversation the phone rang.

While my friend talked on the phone I watched the muted television. The Country Music Television channel was on, so I expected to see some country music videos. I grew up hearing the Grand Old Opry, Loretta Lynn, Hank Snow, Charlie Pride, the Carter Family, Red Foley and Merl Travis, Lester Flatt, Ernest Tubb and Grandpa Jones, Porter Wagoner and June Carter, Eddy Arnold and Johnny Cash. I was watching the channel to see the country I grew up with. What I saw was *soft pornography*, and - over the course of 4 videos - men and women doing and showing things in public that decent people used not to do.

It's sad, but it's predictable, too. There was a time when television carried a bare modicum of decency, but it is predictable.

There are *two laws of God found in nature* that apply to all life - we call them the *Laws of Thermodynamics*.

The *first law of Thermodynamics states that mortal man cannot create or destroy energy*. You *can* change energy from one form to another - electricity to heat, heat that will boil water and make steam, hot steam to push a piston (mechanical energy) or rotate a turbine that makes electricity that in turn can be changed to light in a light bulb. This is the first law. The *second law of Thermodynamics is that all energy decays or degrades*. The first law of Thermodynamics is in effect when you convert the gasoline in your car to forward motion. But if you run out of gas the car will *coast* to a stop. It's motion will decay. In fact, the second law of Thermodynamics teaches us that *all things decay* - even us. We wear

down, we wear out, we degrade in the physical realm.

The Bible explains the two laws of Thermodynamics by telling us that *there is One God Who made all things, all life and all energy*, and that *the decay in creation was brought about when man walked away from God in the Garden*.

Those who live their lives apart from Christ are in a state of *constant decay*, a state the Bible calls both *physical* and *spiritual* death. Look at our text:

**FOCAL** 1 John 3:14 <sup>KJV</sup> **We know that we have passed from death unto life**, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not [his] brother abideth in death.

The Christian - though he or she continues to decay *physically* because of Adam's sin - has passed from death (the second law of Thermodynamics) to life. God, the Source of all Life/ Energy, can create *new energy*. He alone is Creator - we are not. *This is why we cannot work our way into Heaven!* Again, the first law of thermodynamics teaches this. So we expect creation - including the morality of unsaved man - to continue to decay. Those who are yet bound to death, to the state of this world, *cannot* be any better, nor can they get any better. Humanism teaches that man *can* get better and better. Yet history as well as scientific law proves that *any people long divorced from God* will, in time, degrade to a point of utter chaos.

Global warming and the other eco-prophets of doom who teach that we can *fix* creation ignore the laws of thermodynamics. Things will not get better. They *will* get worse - but God has a solution.

The title of this message is "**Secrets to Answered Prayer**". You may be wondering what the laws of Thermodynamics have to do with prayer. Here's the key: unless you are saved by faith in Christ, unless God Himself is inside of you, you are *still in a state of bondage to death*. God IS the Source of all Life, the Creator of all energy, and the Only One Who can grant you eternal life. Every time there is a great disaster in our country the President and its leaders calls on the country to pray. Many people DO pray to what they assume is The God. But once the disaster is over they cease praying and begin playing once more. God can and does answer prayer. But there are certain conditions to answered prayer. Let's look at these conditions.

### **Condition 1: The Petitioner Must Have Passed From Death To Life**

**FOCAL** 1 John 3:14-16 <sup>KJV</sup> **We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.** He that loveth not [his] brother abideth in death. {15} Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. {16} Hereby perceive we the love [of God], because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down [our] lives for the brethren.

Do you want God to answer your prayers? Then you *must be born again* - you must be saved by faith in Christ. There is a *hyper-Grace Movement* that has moved into Christianity who teach that the free Grace of God *in no way* requires a change of life on the part of the saved. Yet the Scripture *repeatedly* tells us that those who are in the Family of God **have passed from death to life**. How do we know this? Again, our text tells us:

**FOCAL** 1 John 3:14 <sup>KJV</sup> **We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not [his] brother abideth in death.**

If you are saved, then God *must* have done a work of salvation in you. If God - the Creator of all energy and life - brought you to a state of *supernatural life*, then you *have passed* from death to life. If you have **passed from death to life** then you are willing to **love the other members of the Family of God**. The Apostle spoke of those who *looked like Christians* but who were without content when he wrote:

2 Peter 2:17 <sup>KJV</sup> These are **wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest: to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever.**

Those who are *without* change, who have not coming from them the **rivers of living water** that our Lord Jesus promised us:

John 7:38-39 <sup>KJV</sup> **He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.** {39} (But **this spake he of the Spirit**, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

"Wells without water" are those who *profess* Christ and yet are *not changed* into His image by the power of God. If you are saved by faith, God is in you. If God is in you, you *are His child*. If God is in you, you are to produce fruit as His child.

If God is in you, He *will* function through you. You will produce the *fruit of the Spirit* if you are saved!

Jesus told us:

Matthew 7:16-18 <sup>KJV</sup> **Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?** {17} **Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.** {18} **A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither [can] a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.**

If you have passed from **death to life** then you are **designed by God** to bring forth the same fruit that Christ brought forth. Jesus lives inside of you. Look further at

our focal text:

**FOCAL** 1 John 3:16 <sup>KJV</sup> Hereby **perceive we the love [of God], because he laid down his life for us:** and we ought to lay down [our] lives for the brethren.

One of the signs that we are Christ's - that we are *truly saved* - is that we mimic Christ in our willingness to lay down our lives for other Family members.

Listen Beloved: God laid down His life for us! That's exactly what this verse tells us - **we perceive or can see the love of God, because God laid down His life for us.** I do not believe that it's a coincidence that **1 John 3:16** corresponds perfectly to **John 3:16**, which reads:

**John 3:16** <sup>KJV</sup> **For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**

God the Father gave us God the Son, and God the Son **laid down His life for us.** God did not merely *say* He loved us. God **proved** He loved us by surrendering His all to us. He gave us all that He could give us. He *took on Himself the second law of Thermodynamics, Adamic Sin, so He could come to live inside of us and give us eternal life.*

**Illustrate** Jesus Christ is God! God laid down His life

for us! Because of this great love, *we are* required to **lay down our lives for one another**. God is in us, so we can do no less. If the apples of Sodom or the grapes of Gomorrah hang from our vines, God will not hear our prayers. Those who pray to the unknown god are like sleepwalkers, praying for things they know not what to a god they know not whom. Only those *born again* need to seek blessings from the *Only Begotten*. God knows your heart! Have you never seen on television two actors fighting with swords. They slash and slash, and as you watch them you are sure that one will certainly die. As you watch, though, you see that there is a pattern to their thrust and parry. After a few moments you can see that the action is surely rehearsed, though it be well done. This is no real sword fight, but a play, a bit of entertainment.

So it is with play actors at Christianity. There are many who profess to know Him as Savior, but who have never passed from death to life. Their lives show the wrong type of fruit. They do not lay down their lives for the brethren, but they play fairly well at being Christians. Yet Jesus knows, for He sees the heart. The tombstone may be white and clean, but inside are dead men's bones, no life at all. The Bible says:

**Isaiah 59:1-3** <sup>KJV</sup> Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: {2} But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. {3} For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your

**tongue hath muttered perverseness.**

The Lord *wants* to save, and to bless, and to preserve. It is His pleasure to answer our prayers.

God answers our prayers *because* we are passed from death to light, His children by the Blood of Christ.

But we must first *be saved* before anything else can occur.

### **Condition 2: The Petitioner Lives According To The Family Code of Love**

**FOCAL** 1 John 3:14, 17-18 <sup>KJV</sup> We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. **He that loveth not [his] brother abideth in death. ... {17} But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels [of compassion] from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? {18} My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.**

**Illustrate** I rarely watch PBS<sup>1</sup> (the Pagan Believer's Station), but I can see a few shows on it with my old TV and the rabbit ear antenna. One of the shows I will watch is **Bob Ross**. Bob is an oil painting artist, and he'll sit there and tell you what he's going to put on the canvas

<sup>1</sup> Public Broadcasting Station, should be called Pagan Believers Station

before he starts. Then he takes some artist oils, a few brushes, and makes what he said he would make. Sometimes when I'm watching him he'll start to do something and I'll think, "Oh no, he's just ruined that picture". But in just a few seconds he'll turn the brush another way, stroke the oil, and it's just right. It never ceases amaze me!

God did not merely tell us that we had to be *born again* to have our prayers answered, but He adds more than that to the picture. I have heard professing Christians speak ill of others and, when I challenge them on what they said, they countered with "but I don't hate them".

God does not define *hatred* as merely *doing evil to someone*, but hatred is also *an absence of the good*.

This is the picture that Our Heavenly Artist paints for us. If we *love* our brothers, then we *will do good* to them. It is not that we will cease to do evil, but we will *begin to do good*.

God's people Israel kept all of the *rituals* of the faith, but lost all it's heart! The Lord told them:

**Isaiah 1:13-20 KJV** Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; [it is] iniquity, even the solemn meeting. {14} **Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear [them]. {15}**

**And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. {16} Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; {17} Learn to do well;** seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. {18} Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. {19} If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: {20} But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken [it].

Israel had learned the *form* of religion without it's heart. They had not **learned to do well**. The family code is *love*, and love - if not expressed - is not perceived. The Apostle clarifies his statement:

**FOCAL** 1 John 3:18 <sup>KJV</sup> My little children, **let us**

**not love in word<sup>2</sup>, neither in tongue<sup>3</sup>; but in deed and in truth.**

This statement is *even stronger* in the original text. The text says, and I paraphrase,

**"Do not just 'love' be something you say, or a doctrine you teach. Love is not love unless it is shown by your actions according to truth".**

Love cannot be perceived unless it is exercised - and exercised in the same way that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ did it. Now, I know that we *will not* be able to love as perfectly as Christ loved.

But if Christ is in us, we can *strive to love like He did*. When we do the best we can, God will hear our prayers.

### **Condition 3: The Petitioner Has A Clean Conscience Before God**

2 (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries) G3056, *λόγος*, *logos*, *log'-os*, From G3004; something *said* (including the *thought*); by implication a *topic* (subject of discourse), also *reasoning* (the mental faculty) or *motive*; by extension a *computation*; specifically (with the article in John) the *Divine Expression* (that is, *Christ*): - account, cause, communication, X concerning, doctrine, fame, X have to do, intent, matter, mouth, preaching, question, reason, + reckon, remove, say (-ing), shew, X speaker, speech, talk, thing, + none of these things move me, tidings, treatise, utterance, word, work.

3 (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries) G1100, *γλῶσσα*, *glōssa*, *gloce'-sah*, Of uncertain affinity; the *tongue*; by implication a *language* (specifically one naturally unacquired): - tongue.

**FOCAL** 1 John 3:18-21 <sup>KJV</sup> My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. {19} And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. {20} For **if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. {21} Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, [then] have we confidence toward God.**

The reason that many prayers are not answered is because **our heart condemns us**. We have failed God in some way and now we beat ourselves up over it. We have unconfessed sin in our lives, and will not bring it before the Throne of Grace. Perhaps we have become discouraged. Dr. **Alvin Vander Griend** said:

**"Not only does sin hinder prayer; prayer hinders sin. The two are always opposed. The more careless we are about sin, the less we will pray. The more we pray, the less careless we will be about sin. Both sin and prayer are powerful forces. Which one is moving you?"**

King David said:

**Psalms 66:18 <sup>KJV</sup> If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear [me]:**

When we harbor the negative in our hearts, this becomes a barrier to effective prayer.

One of my favorite Scriptures is:

**1 John 1:8-9 <sup>KJV</sup> If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. {9} If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

This verse tells me **five things**: (1) I am a sinner, and will probably sin again sometime in my life. (2) God knew I was a sinner when He called me to salvation. (3) Though I may be faithless at times, God is forever faithful to those in His family. (4) When I sin, and admit that sin to Him, *asking forgiveness for it*, God does forgive. (5) God not only forgives, *but He cleanses* the evil of the sin from my life.

The petitioner must have a clean conscience before God, else we will have no confidence when we go to Him in prayer. We must remember the words of the Apostle:

**James 1:6-8 <sup>KJV</sup> But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. {7} For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. {8} A double minded man [is] unstable in all his ways.**

You are His Child by faith in Christ. If you have confessed your sin to Him, and if you love Him and want to serve Him, then will He not meet your every need?

Jesus said:

**Matthew 7:7-11 <sup>KJV</sup> Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: {8} For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. {9} Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? {10} Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? {11} If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?**

Which brings us to the next point:

#### **Condition 4: The Petitioner Asks With A View To Pleasing God**

In **Matthew 7** Jesus said that your Father in Heaven gives **GOOD THINGS** to them that ask Him. God does not give evil things, He gives *good things*. In our focal text we read:

**FOCAL** 1 John 3:22 <sup>KJV</sup> ... whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because **we keep his commandments, and do those things that**

**are pleasing in his sight.**

Do you want God to answer your prayers? Then you must *obey the Father* and *seek to please Him*. Father loves to bless those who bless Him.

It is no secret that God expects His Children to love Him and to obey Him. We have a great and glorious God Who *loves to bless us*, but often He cannot bless us because we do things that are *unpleasing to Him*. We must **do those things which are pleasing in His sight**, NOT *do those things which are pleasing in our sight*. When we surrender to God and say, "Not my will, but thine be done", then God opens the floodgates and pours our mighty blessings on us. As your relationship grows in God the answers to prayer increase. **Florence Allshorn** said:

**"The primary object of prayer is to know God better; we and our needs should come second."**

That great preacher **Edward McKendree Bounds** said:

**"Those who know God the best are the richest and most powerful in prayer. Little acquaintance with God, and strangeness and coldness to Him, make prayer a rare and feeble thing."**

If you are *not* doing things that are pleasing in His sight, then do not be surprised that your prayers are not answered. Those who are in the Family of God should seek, first and foremost, to please God in everything. If

you live to please Him, then you will find that He loves to please you. If you live to please God you will not ask for the wrong things, but will tailor your prayers to satisfy His desires. This is what Jesus did when He prayed three times, falling on His Blessed Face:

**Matthew 26:39** <sup>KJV</sup> "O my **Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou [wilt]."**

There are times when God will take the cup from us, but there are times when He will not remove that cup. If the Father had removed the cup from Christ you and I would be still dead in our sins. Our prayers must be made with a view toward pleasing God our Father, for He alone knows what is best.

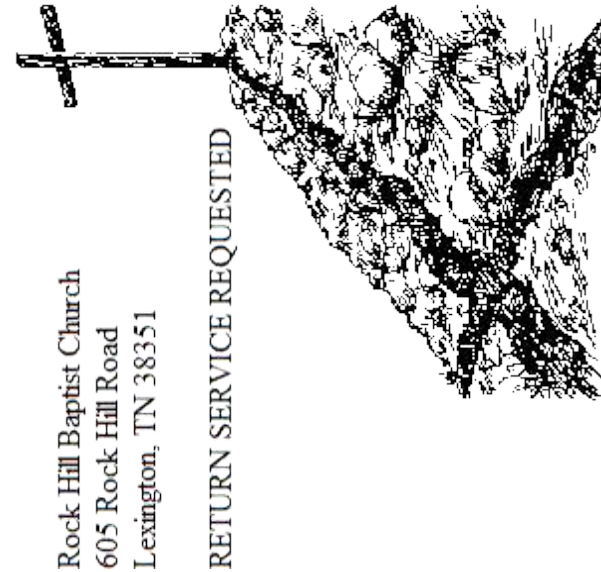
When we pray this way, God hears our prayers. When we live like those who belong to Jesus, then the Father hears and answers our prayers. The Bible says:

**FOCAL** 1 John 3:22-24 <sup>KJV</sup> **And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. {23} And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. {24} And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in**

**him, and he in him.** And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

When we believe on Jesus and live our lives in a way that pleases God, then God will *live in our lives*. He is in us, and we in Him! We know He is in us because He leads us to love like He loved.

Oh dear Father, teach us to love as Jesus loved. Abide in us, show us, move us, prove us. God take control of us, and let us glorify Thy Name through all that we say and do. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen!



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