

## First John 5 and Prayer to Jesus

Jason Patrick Hilburn

*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the **Son of God**. And this is the confidence that we have in **him**, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him (I John 5:13-15, emphasis JPH).*

Some believe this passage authorizes prayer to Jesus. They say the pronoun "**him**" in bold print above refers back to the antecedent "**Son**," implying that Christians may ask the Son anything in prayer, according to His will. However, there is much more evidence to support the fact that "**him**" refers to its nearest antecedent, which is "**God**." In fact, after just a few subsequent verses, there is another example of a pronoun referring back to God:

*And we know that the **Son of God** is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in **his** Son Jesus Christ... (I John 5:20).*

To whom does the pronoun "**his**" in this verse refer? Does it refer to "**Son**" or "**God**"? It obviously refers to "**God**." However, there are other pronouns ("**him**") that refer to the Son, so the only way to know in such cases is by examining the context.

The following is a practical example of such a grammatical construction: "Tom is married now, and Bryson is the 6 month old son of Tom. **He** is so happy to have a baby boy." The pronoun "He" obviously refers to the father, but now notice the pronoun used the opposite way: "Tom is married now, and Bryson is the 6 month old son of Tom. **He** is such a well-mannered baby boy." Again, context must clarify the antecedent of pronouns used in such ways. The context of First John and the rest of the New Testament clarifies that "**God**" (the Father) must have been the one under consideration in First John 5:14-15 as the recipient of prayers.

Notice in the verses leading up to First John 5:14-15, John was emphasizing that God the Father is the one who gave us great blessings:

*He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that **God gave** of his Son. And this is the record, that **God hath given to us eternal life**, and this life is in his Son (I John 5:10-11).*

God the Father is emphasized as the Giver of these perfect gifts (James 1:17; cf. Matthew 20:23); therefore John is teaching Christians to ask the Father for the things Christians

need (I John 5:14-15; cf. Matthew 6:9-ff; 7:7-11; Luke 11:1-ff; John 16:23; Philippians 4:6; Revelation 8:3-4, etc.).

If the reader is still unconvinced, let him compare I John 3:21-24 with 5:14-15. Notice the word “*confidence*” in both chapters (3:21; 5:14), and in whom is this confidence placed regarding prayer? The answer is “*God*”! [the Father] (3:21). Notice also the phrase “*whatsoever we ask, we receive of him*” in 3:22, which is clearly parallel to 5:15. Finally, notice that all Three Godhead Members are in 3:21-24, but in that passage John clearly taught that prayer should be addressed to the Father:

*Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we **confidence** toward **God**. And **whatsoever we ask, we receive of him**, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. 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. 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 (I John 3:21-24).*

<b>I John 3</b>	<b>I John 5</b>
“confidence toward <b>God</b> ” (3:21) [God the Father, evidenced by context]	“confidence that we have in <b>him</b> ” (5:14)
“whatsoever we ask, we receive of <b>him</b> ” (3:22) (God the Father)	“whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of <b>him</b> ” (5:15)

This should be sufficient to refute the notion that John was teaching something different in chapter 5 than he was in chapter 3, but the reader may also compare what John taught about praying for forgiveness in I John 1:9. This was also prayer to the Father, as is evidenced by the immediate and greater context.

<http://www.TheBibleDomain.com>

Last modified December 12, 2016