

1 John 3:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

Analysis

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. John connects obedience to answered prayer. "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him" (kai ho ean aitōmen lambanomen ap' autou)—the present tenses indicate habitual pattern. This isn't claiming Christians receive absolutely everything they request, but that those who love God and keep His commandments find their prayers answered. The "whatsoever" is qualified by the context of asking according to God's will (5:14).

"Because we keep his commandments" (hoti tas entolas autou tēroumen)—tēreō (τηρέω) means to keep, guard, or observe carefully. This isn't perfection but habitual obedience, the pattern of a life aligned with God's will. "And do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (kai ta aresta enōpion autou poioumen)—actively doing what pleases God, not merely avoiding what displeases Him. The present tenses again indicate ongoing practice.

This verse teaches that answered prayer correlates with obedience. Not that obedience earns answered prayer (that would be works-righteousness), but that obedience aligns us with God's will, and prayers aligned with His will are answered (5:14). Disobedience hinders prayer (Psalm 66:18, James 4:3). Those who love God and keep His commandments pray according to His will, and such prayers are granted. This provides both incentive for obedience and explanation

for unanswered prayer—perhaps we're asking amiss (James 4:3) or living in disobedience.

Historical Context

Jesus promised that asking in His name would be answered (John 14:13-14, 15:7, 16:23-24). However, asking in His name doesn't mean merely adding "in Jesus's name" to prayers but asking in accordance with His character and will. Jewish prayer tradition emphasized approaching God based on covenant faithfulness and Torah obedience—not earning God's favor but aligning with His revealed will.

John's teaching that obedience relates to answered prayer echoes Old Testament wisdom (Proverbs 15:29, 28:9). The New Testament consistently connects prayer and obedience (Matthew 6:14-15, 1 Peter 3:7). This wasn't legalism but recognition that relationship with God involves both privilege (asking) and responsibility (obeying). Genuine love for God produces both prayer and obedience.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does your obedience to God's commandments (or lack thereof) currently affect your prayer life?
2. What unanswered prayers might be related to asking outside God's will or living in disobedience?
3. How can you align your prayers more closely with God's will as revealed in His commandments?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	οὐ	ἐὰν	αἰτῶμεν	λαμβάνομεν	παρ'	αὐτοῦ	ὅτι
And	whatsoever	G1437	we ask	we receive	of	him	because
G2532	G3739		G154	G2983	G3844	G846	G3754
τὰς	ἐντολὰς	αὐτοῦ	τηροῦμεν	καὶ	τὰ		
G3588	commandments	him	we keep	And	G3588		
	G1785	G846	G5083	G2532			
ἀρεστὰ		ἐνώπιον	αὐτοῦ	ποιοῦμεν			
those things that are pleasing		sight	him	do			
G701		G1799	G846	G4160			

Additional Cross-References

John 15:7 (Word): If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Matthew 21:22 (Parallel theme): And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

1 John 5:14 (Parallel theme): And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

Mark 11:24 (Parallel theme): Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

John 9:31 (Sin): Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.

Proverbs 15:29 (Parallel theme): The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.

John 14:13 (Parallel theme): And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

Psalms 34:4 (Parallel theme): I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.

James 1:5 (Parallel theme): If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

John 8:29 (Parallel theme): And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.