

1 John 5:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

Analysis

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. This verse establishes the foundation for bold, assured prayer. "Confidence" (parrēsia) means boldness, freedom of speech, or fearless access—used for citizens' right to address governing authorities. Believers have parrēsia before God, not because of merit but because of Christ's mediation and our adoption as children.

The confidence is "in him" (pros auton)—toward God, in relationship with Him. Prayer isn't manipulating an impersonal force but approaching our Father who loves us. The conditional "if we ask any thing according to his will" (ean ti aitōmetha kata to thelēma autou) defines the scope of confident prayer. "Anything" (ti) is broad, but "according to his will" provides the boundary. This isn't limitation but liberation—it frees us from anxiety about whether our prayers "work" and directs us to seek God's will, not merely our desires.

"He heareth us" (akouei hēmōn) means more than auditory reception—it implies favorable response and attention to act. God doesn't merely hear; He hears with intent to answer according to His perfect will. This presumes we know God's will, which comes through Scripture, the Spirit's illumination, and alignment with God's revealed character. Prayers "according to his will" are necessarily answered because they align with what God has already purposed. This provides tremendous assurance while keeping us God-centered in prayer.

Historical Context

In the ancient world, approaching deity was often fraught with fear and uncertainty. Pagan worshipers offered sacrifices hoping to appease capricious gods but had no assurance of being heard. Mystery religions promised special access through initiation but maintained hierarchical systems. Even in Judaism, direct access to God's presence was mediated through priests, with the Holy of Holies entered only by the high priest once annually.

John's declaration that believers have confident access to God through Christ was revolutionary. Hebrews 4:16 similarly calls believers to "come boldly unto the throne of grace." Christ's death tore the temple veil (Matthew 27:51), symbolizing direct access to God for all believers. This doctrine of *parrēsia* democratized prayer—no priestly mediators needed beyond Christ Himself.

The phrase "according to his will" protected against both presumption and despair. Gnostics claimed special knowledge enabling them to control spiritual forces. John insists prayer aligns with God's sovereign will, not human manipulation. Meanwhile, some Jewish groups emphasized God's transcendence so much that prayer felt futile. John assures that God hears and responds when we pray according to His will—which is knowable through His revealed word.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How do we discern God's will in order to pray 'according to his will'?
2. What's the difference between praying according to God's will and praying with resignation ('Thy will be done' as pessimistic surrender)?
3. How does confidence in prayer relate to faith—can we have boldness while acknowledging God may answer differently than we expect?

Interlinear Text

καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ παρόργοσία ἡν ἔχομεν πρὸς αὐτοῦ
And this is the confidence that we have in him
G2532 G3778 G2076 G3588 G3954 G3739 G2192 G4314 G846

ὅτι ἐάν τι αἰτώμεθα κατὰ τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ
that if any thing we ask according will him
G3754 G1437 G5100 G154 G2596 G3588 G2307 G846

ἀκούει ἡμῶν
he heareth us
G191 G2257

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 33:3 (Parallel theme): Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.

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.

John 15:7 (Parallel theme): 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.

Psalms 34:17 (Parallel theme): The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.

James 4:3 (Parallel theme): Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

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

Ephesians 3:12 (Parallel theme): In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

John 16:24 (Parallel theme): Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

1 John 2:28 (Parallel theme): And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.