

1 John 5:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

Analysis

And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. This verse builds logically on verse 14, moving from confidence that God hears to assurance that He grants our requests. The structure is conditional but assumes the condition is met: "if we know that he hear us" presumes we do know (based on praying according to His will, v. 14). The verb "know" (oidamen) indicates settled, certain knowledge—not mere hope or wishful thinking.

The conclusion follows necessarily: "we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." The repetition of "know" emphasizes certainty. Present tense "we have" (echomen) indicates present possession, not future hope. This is stunning: prayers prayed according to God's will are answered so certainly that we can consider them already granted. The phrase "the petitions that we desired" (ta aitēmata ha ētēkamen) uses perfect tense—requests we have made with continuing effects.

This isn't prosperity gospel or name-it-claim-it theology. The key is verse 14's qualifier: prayers according to God's will. When we pray aligned with Scripture's promises and God's revealed purposes, we have absolute certainty of answer—not because our faith manipulates God, but because we're asking for what He's already purposed to give. This shifts prayer from trying to change God's mind to aligning with His will. The assurance comes not from our faith's strength but from God's faithfulness to His promises.

Historical Context

This teaching provided crucial assurance to early Christians facing persecution. When praying for deliverance, protection, or provision, they could have confidence that God heard and would answer according to His perfect will—even if the answer was martyrdom rather than escape. Church history records countless examples of believers facing death with supernatural peace, certain their prayers for faithfulness were answered even as they died.

The verse also addresses the problem of unanswered prayer that has troubled believers throughout history. James 4:3 explains that prayers motivated by selfish desires aren't answered. This passage provides the positive complement: prayers according to God's will are certainly answered. This doesn't mean we always perceive the answer immediately or understand it fully, but God's faithfulness guarantees response.

Throughout church history, this principle has grounded intercessory prayer. Missionaries prayed for unreached people groups, certain God heard and would fulfill His purposes of gathering His elect from every nation. Reformers prayed for church renewal, confident God would answer according to His sovereign purposes. Parents prayed for children's salvation, trusting God's promises. The certainty wasn't based on seeing immediate results but on God's faithfulness to His word.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How can we have present possession of petitions not yet visibly answered?
2. What role does faith play in claiming answers to prayer before seeing them?
3. How do we avoid presumption when claiming certainty that God will answer our prayers?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἐὰν οἴδαμεν ὅτι ἀκούει ἡμῶν ἀ
And if we know that he hear us whatsoever G302
G2532 G1437 G1492 G3754 G191 G2257 G3739

ἡτήκαμεν οἴδαμεν ὅτι ἔχομεν τὰ αἰτήματα ἀ
that we desired we know that we have the petitions whatsoever G3739
G154 G1492 G3754 G2192 G155 G3588

ἡτήκαμεν παρ' αὐτοῦ
that we desired of him
G154 G3844 G846

Additional Cross-References

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

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.