

How to Get Answers to Our Prayers (1 John 5:14-15)

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In the late 19th century John Wanamaker opened a department store in Philadelphia. Within a few years the enterprise had become one of the most successful businesses in the country. But operating his store wasn't Wanamaker's only responsibility. He was also named Postmaster General of the United States, and he served as superintendent for what was then the largest Sunday school in the world at Bethany Presbyterian Church. When someone asked him how he could hold all those positions at once, he explained, "Early in life I read, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' The Sunday school is my business, all the rest are the things." One evidence of Wanamaker's desire to keep the Lord's work first in his life was a specially constructed soundproof room in his store. Every day he spent 30 minutes there praying and meditating upon God's Word. He had his priorities straight!

Prayer should be a priority in our lives. It should not be a secondary matter but a primary concern of our lives. We must also understand that God truly wants to answer our prayers. Sometimes we think that God is not interested in our prayers and that He sits in Heaven without paying attention to what we are saying. This certainly is not true. God is interested in the prayers of His saints and He wants to answer our prayers. Unselfish prayer or properly motivated prayer is described as incense or fragrance that ascends up to God (Rev. 5:8; 8:3-4).

In this study we want to focus on the importance of praying in accordance with God's will. There is a lot of praying being done today, but if we do not learn how to pray with God's will and purpose in mind, then our prayers will lack answers. How do we pray in a manner which reflects God's will? What is the secret of learning to pray according to God's will? The Lord does hear our prayers and He wants to answer our prayers, as we learn to pray in a spiritual manner, as we learn to align our prayers with God's plan and purpose for our lives. In order to receive answers to our prayers we must learn

the secret of praying according to God's will. We must meet this important requirement for answered prayer. In this study we want to address how believers can receive answers to their prayers as they learn to pray in a manner which reflects God's will.

1 John 5:14-15 says:

“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.”

John had been writing about the assurance of salvation that every believer can have based upon God's promise and inner witness (1 John 5:9-13). Now he concludes that a person who believes in the name of Jesus Christ can also have assurance when approaching God in prayer, knowing that God is ready and willing to answer his prayer, as he learns to pray in accordance with God's will. Dear friend, I can tell you that God is alive because I talked with Him this morning in prayer! What a privilege it is to talk with God and receive answers to our prayers.

There are three observations related to answered prayer.

A. Confidence (1 John 5:14)

First John 5:14 says “And this is the confidence that we have in him.” If we are ever going to receive answers to our prayers, we must possess confidence. The word “confidence” carries the meaning of being “unreserved in speech” or “to possess freedom in speaking.” It connotes speaking with boldness, fearlessness, and assurance. The believer should possess confidence when talking to God, knowing that God is still on the throne, and that He still answers prayer in order to bring His sovereign purpose to fruition in the lives of His saints. Therefore, the confidence that John is speaking about is a confidence that God's people can possess when they pray. To state it simply, when God's children learn to pray in accordance with God's will they can have confidence or assurance that they will receive answers to their prayers.

1. The confidence we should possess (1 John 5:14a)

John speaks about the “confidence we have.” This means that a believer can possess confidence in relationship to his prayer life. John says there is a confidence we can have in connection with our praying. Every believer can have the assurance that God answers prayer. Since God does answer prayer, every child of God can know that whenever he prays according to God’s will, God will answer his prayers. This is a confidence we should possess as we pray to the Lord on a daily basis. Dear friend, when we talk to God in prayer we can do so with the assurance that He hears us, and that He will answer our prayers, which line up with His perfect will for our lives. We can have this confidence in our time of prayer. We can be sure that God wants to answer our prayers in order to get His will done in connection with our lives and the lives of others.

This is something thrilling to contemplate. Every time we pray addressing God’s will, we can be confident that God will answer us, in the way we prayed. This is one reason why we can address God with boldness and confidence. We can know that God is interested in accomplishing His will for our lives as we pray. Therefore, praying down God’s will for our lives is very important.

Hebrews 4:16

“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

The word translated “boldly” is the same Greek word translated “confidence” in 1 John 5:14. This verse is saying the same thing in relationship to our prayer life. We can approach God with confidence during our times of prayer, knowing that we are accepted in God’s presence through Christ, that He hears our cries, and wants to help and strengthen our lives in times of difficulty and trouble! One thing is certain. God is always ready to answer the believer’s prayer for help and strength since He always promises to strengthen His people (Isaiah 41:10). We can have confidence that God hears our prayers for help and daily strength and that He will come to our rescue in days of turmoil and trial.

Confidence is very important in relationship to our prayer lives. As we learn to pray reflecting God's will we can be assured that God will answer our prayers and give us the petitions we asked.

2. The confidence we share in God's person (1 John 5:14)

John next adds that we must have confidence "in him" (1 John 5:14). This is where our confidence lies. It's in the power and promise of God to answer prayer. We must put our complete confidence and trust in God to answer our prayers. As we pray we must learn to trust God to answer the prayer in His time, in His way, and according to His purpose. There is no point to come before God in prayer if we have no confidence in Him, or if we lack confidence in His ability to answer prayer.

A related concept to confidence would be praying in faith, believing that God does answer prayer that is in accordance with His will and purpose for our lives. Each child of God should live in a state of confidence in relationship to his prayer life believing that God truly does answer prayer.

Mark 11:22

"And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God."

This is the simplicity of it all. Keep things simple. We are to have faith in God when we pray. We are to trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus! The answer is God!

Someone once asked D. L. Moody:

"Mr. Moody, don't you ever have any doubts?" He replied, 'I don't have any time to doubt. Some people are full of doubts because they have nothing else to do. They have them in the morning, at noon, and at night. They think doubts, doubts, doubts all the time. If you get busy in the Lord's work and begin seeing Him answer your prayers, away go your doubts!"

James 1:5-7

"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. 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. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.”

Here is a promise. When we pray for wisdom and truly wait on God, then God will give us the wisdom we need. However, the qualifying statement is that we must pray or ask “in faith.” We must pray with confidence that God will give us the wisdom we need to make right decisions. God is looking for confident praying. He is looking for those children who really believe God wants to answer their prayers and know that He is interested in granting their requests which align with His sovereign purpose for their lives.

We should never pray while doubting God. The seasoned Christian knows that God’s will must always come to pass in relationship to his prayers (1 John 5:14) but he also knows that he can pray in confidence, believing that God can and will answer every prayer, which aligns with His purpose and perfect will for the believer’s life. The point is this. We must pray believing that God can answer our prayers. James says that we can pray in a “wavering” fashion, which means to pray with a divided heart. One moment we believe and in the next breath we don’t believe.

James 1:8 concludes:

“A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”

A double minded man is divided in his opinion. We might say, “Maybe God will answer this prayer, but maybe He won’t. Maybe God will help me to overcome this sin today, maybe He won’t.” This is a clear case of spiritual schizophrenia. To be like the waves of the sea simply means that you doubt God’s ability to answer your prayers. When you pray in an unbelieving manner, you are compared to the waves of the sea, which are tossed to and fro by the wind. This type of prayer goes back and forth, believing and not believing. In reality, this is not true faith at all because true faith never doubts God! True faith is unlike the waves of the sea. It does not vacillate back and forth but remains firm and stationary in relationship to God’s ability to answer prayer.

Many times we lack faith and confidence when we pray. We really don’t believe that God is going to do something! Of course, we are wrong! God always is doing something. God is always up to

something. Shame on us when we pray without confidence! Beware of becoming wavy or divided in praying! We must ask in faith, believe that God can do the impossible, and move in wonderful ways. Faithless praying is dead praying! Don't pray with the mindset, "God, maybe You will answer or maybe You won't." This is praying out of both sides of your mouth at the same time!

A woman telephoned the manager of a large opera house and told him she had lost a valuable diamond pin the night before at the concert. The man asked her to hold the line. A search was made and the brooch was found; but when he got back to the phone, the woman had hung up. He waited for her to call again and even put a notice in the paper, but he heard nothing further. What a strange and foolish person, we say, but isn't this the way some of us pray? We tell the Lord all about our needs, but then fail to "hold the line." As a result, we miss the joy of answered prayer and the thrill and reward of a persistent faith.

Some Christians are unbelievers when it comes to prayer. There is such a person as an "unbelieving believer." This may sound like a misnomer or misapplied designation but it's true. There are many who have believed on Christ for salvation but find it hard to really believe God for answered prayer in relationship to their own personal lives. When you go to God in prayer you must have faith or confidence in His ability to answer all your prayers which line up with His sovereign purpose and plan for your life. You must believe or have faith in the God who can answer your prayers. Unbelief does not please God.

Hebrews 11:6

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

Prayer without faith is not prayer at all. Jesus during His earthly ministry encouraged His disciples to pray in faith believing that God would answer their prayers.

Matthew 21:21-22

"Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have

faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.”

Mark 11:22-24

“And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”

These promises of Jesus provide us with real incentive to pray! They give us something to cling to and believe. Is there a mountain in your life right now that you are praying for God to remove? Of course, these verses do not teach that we can get answers to our prayers that are outside the parameters of God’s will for our lives. Other Scriptures (Luke 22:42; James 4:15) and our passage in 1 John 5:14 would override this spurious conclusion and interpretation. God does not answer selfish prayers (James 4:3) and prayers that do not line up with God’s will or purpose for our lives. However, God does promise to answer those prayers that accomplish His purpose and agenda for our Christian lives. There is a general application of these verses that apply to Christ’s followers of every age. As God’s desires become our desires there is the promise of answered prayer.

Psalms 37:4

“Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”

When God places the desire in our heart for a mountain to be moved then the mountain will be removed when we pray in faith. When God places in our heart the desire to accomplish some specific task for Him, then He will provide us with the necessary strength, funds, and assistance to accomplish the task, if we pray in faith. God’s desire, will, and a believer’s faith all work together to bring to fruition His sovereign purpose related to their lives.

The above verses about moving mountains are given to Christ's followers in order to encourage them to have faith in their times of praying ("believing, ye shall receive" – Matt. 21:22) as they contemplate how much God wants to answer their prayers. The point is this. God promises to answer our prayers ("and ye shall have them" – Mark 11:24) when we pray with God's desires in our heart and when our prayers align with His program and purpose for our lives. The lesson to learn is this. God wants to answer our prayers. Many times we limit God by limiting what we think God can do. However, the Bible teaches that nothing is impossible with God (Mark 10:27). God does answer our prayers! He is ready, willing, and waiting to answer our prayers. This is what these verses are teaching and this is why we should pray in confidence or faith to Him.

Someone wrote:

"Between the humble and contrite heart and the majesty of heaven, there are no barriers; the only password is prayer."

B. Conformity (1 John 5:14)

The second important observation that is related to answered prayer is conformity to God's will. John reminds us that we must pray or ask "according to His will" (1 John 5:14). In other words, we must be willing to conform our wills to His will! This is a very important part of receiving answers to our prayers. Many times we want to get our will done on earth instead of God's will and plan accomplished for our lives.

1. The scope of our conformity

When it comes to prayer, the scope of our praying should be unlimited. We can ask "anything" of God realizing that nothing is too hard for God to do (Gen. 18:14). Sometimes we think our petition is too small for God to be interested in and other times we feel that our petition is too big for God to answer. The truth of the matter is this. We can "ask anything" knowing that God is interested in our personal lives and wants to bring to fruition His will and plan for our lives.

Philippians 4:6

“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”

The Bible reminds us that we can pray about “every thing” (Phil. 4:6) and “anything” (1 John 5:14) connected with our daily living. We should not limit our petitions to just small things or big things but all things. We must remember that the God who created the universe is above everything and mightier than anything we could ever face in life. He is the almighty God that is the creator and sustainer of the universe. Certainly we can petition Him and expect that He can intervene and make a difference in our lives and the lives of others.

Jeremiah 32:17 says:

“Ah Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee.”

“I read in the Bible the promise of God,
That nothing for Him is too hard;
Impossible things He has promised to do,
If we faithfully trust in His Word.

Nothing is impossible
When you put your trust in God;
Nothing is impossible
When you're trusting in His Word.

Hearken to the voice of God to thee:
‘Is there anything too hard for Me?’
Then put your trust in God alone
And rest upon His Word--
For everything, O everything,
Yes, everything is possible with God!

2. The stipulation of our conformity

Many are being led astray by the modern “name it and claim it” theology. A popular teaching says that a Christian can ask God for whatever he wants, he can just name it, and then claim that he will

receive the petition from God. In essence, we can write our own answer to our prayers! This is an unscriptural teaching based upon faulty interpretation of various Bible texts. John adds that our prayers must be “according to God’s will” (1 John 5:14). This is the stipulation or condition that God places on all answered prayer. Our prayers must be according to God’s will. In other words, only those prayers that line up with God’s will and purpose for our lives will be answered. Praying according to God’s will involves more than just saying, “Thy will be done.” As we are going to discover, praying according to God’s will involves praying in a Biblical and spiritual manner so we receive the very things that we ask God to supply.

Let us never forget that when we petition God we must do so realizing that the Lord is in charge of the answer and that He always answers in the right way. We sometimes think that we have the right answer, but we are not God, and God may have a different plan for our lives, and a different direction for us to take than what we are asking. In order to get answers to our prayers, we must understand the importance of praying according to God’s will and purpose for our lives. When we do pray according to God’s will, God promises to always answer our prayers.

Our prayers should always have God’s will and interest in mind. In Luke 22:42 Jesus possessed this same attitude when He prayed in the garden: “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.” The promise in 1 John 5:14 is this. When we pray according to God’s will and purpose for our lives we will receive God’s answer to the petition we ask.

Jesus gave a model prayer to His disciples which included the need to pray that God’s will might be done on earth (“Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” - Matt. 6:10). Certainly this should be our attitude and aim in all of our praying.

Someone wrote:

“Every day we plead in the Lord's Prayer, ‘Thy will be done!’ Yet when his will is done we grumble and are not pleased with it.”

This may be true of your life today. Perhaps you are not resting in the way God has chosen to answer your prayer. Remember that God sometimes answers in a different way than what we pray.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:7-9:

“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

Robert Murray McCheyne said:

“God will either give you what you ask, or something far better.”

For Paul, the apostle, it was the privilege to grow in the sufficiency of God’s grace and power for his life. The same may be true for your life as well. God may have better things for us if we will just open up to His will and purpose for our lives (Rom. 8:28).

One woman wrote:

“God has not always answered my prayers. If He had, I would have married the wrong man - several times!”

Actually, God did answer this woman’s prayers. He said, “No!” This is an answer to some of our petitions and prayers. We must remember that answers to prayers will come in several ways:

a. There is a direct answer.

Sometimes we pray for a specific request and it is answered at once, without any delay. It is very thrilling to see God respond instantly by granting our request that we had prayed about. All of us are full of joy when God answers our prayers in this way (James 1:5; 5:17).

b. There is a delayed answer.

God sometimes has the intention of granting our request, but delays the answer. God sometimes intentionally postpones answering our prayers to teach us patience (James 1:4). God knows when it’s the best time to grant the request that we have prayed about. We should not become discouraged if our request is not granted at once (Luke

11:9-10). We must allow God to work within His own sovereign timetable (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

c. There is a different answer.

Because of unknown selfishness and shortsightedness, we are not always aware of what we really need. We may boldly ask for something; however, we might still unknowingly ask in a selfish manner. Therefore, God sometimes changes the way that He decides to answer the prayer that we offer up to Him. He has the right to do this as He did with the apostle Paul (2 Cor. 12:7-9). Paul unknowingly prayed for relief but God changed the answer to his prayer by giving him grace instead of relief. God can give us a different answer to our prayers.

William Culbertson said;

“Keep praying, but be thankful that God’s answers are wiser than your prayers!”

d. There is a denied answer.

Nobody likes to recognize denial as an answer to prayer. God may decide to deny our request simply because it did not align with His will or purpose for our lives. Sometimes we may think that God does not answer our prayers when we pray to Him because He does not give us what we ask for. The fact of the matter is this, God did answer your prayer, you just missed the answer! God said, “No.” When God says “No” this is an answer to prayer (1 Kings 19:4). Elijah prayed that he would die, but his foolish request was denied.

Someone once said:

“I have lived to thank God that all my prayers have not been answered.”

This is very true. However, 1 John 5:14 gives us the promise that when we do pray according to God’s will, or when our desires and prayers align with God’s purpose, the Lord hears us with the intent of answering our requests. This promise reminds us that we must rest in the will of God for our lives and learn to pray according to God’s will.

How do we pray in a manner which reflects God's will? What is the secret of learning to pray according to God's will? The answer to these questions is not difficult. We must have God's truth abiding in our hearts. James says that we will receive "what we desired of him" (James 5:15) but let us remember that our desires will match God's desires when we are a Word-filled believer (Ps. 37:4; Col. 3:16). In order to get answers to our prayers, our desires must align with God's desires, as they are outlined in the Bible, and placed within our heart by God.

Jesus said in John 15:7:

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Abiding in Christ means to have communion and fellowship with the Lord through purity and sanctification of living. When you allow the Word of God to "abide in you" it means that the promises, principles, and purposes which are stated in God's Word become part of your mind and heart. You understand what God's Word says about life, suffering, and godly living. Therefore, you can now pray according to God's will in relationship to these areas and receive Scriptural answers to your prayers.

John 15:7 promises that when we pray, abiding in Christ and having His truth abiding in our hearts, we can receive answers to our prayers ("have what ye will"). The catch is this. When we have God's truth in our hearts, we will pray Scripturally, and according to God's will. We will not pray selfishly and carnally. As we pray over God's truth, we will receive answers to our prayers, and these answers will come in many different ways, not just one particular way in which we pray.

Knowledge of God's will is largely found in His Word. Therefore, as we become conversant or familiar with His Word we can pray more carefully in accordance to His revealed will. Naturally, Christians today discern God's will through the Scriptures. This is because the vast majority of God's will has already been revealed in the Bible (Psalm 40:8). As we pray according to the principles, promises, and purposes of the Bible, we can know that God hears us with the intent to answer or grant the petitions (requests) which we ask of Him.

Let's give an example at this point. We might learn to pray for greater strength during sickness instead of just praying for our healing. We might learn to pray for patience during testing instead of just praying for the removal of the trial. There is a sweet, upward, spiritual spiral here. As we become more familiar with His Word, we can pray more intelligently and receive Biblical answers to our prayers, since our prayers align with God's will for our lives. The secret of answered prayer is listening to God's Word and praying in a Biblical fashion with Biblical goals in our mind and heart. God wants us to listen to His Word and be inspired to pray Biblically and agree with God's purposes, which are outlined in the Scriptures.

Think of it this way. If the truth of God's Word is in our hearts, we will not pray lopsided or only one dimensional ("Lord heal me"), since God does not always choose to heal (Ex. 4:11; 2 Cor. 12:9; 2 Tim. 4:20). Instead, we will broaden our Biblical praying, pray more intelligently, and ask God not only for healing, but also for God to develop us into a stronger Christian and open up doors of witness for Him. As we pray Biblically and according to God's will we will broaden our prayers and receive answers to them.

None of us can claim to know the exact manner God will answer our prayers in relationship to come specific request (healing, marriage partner, job, important decision that needs to be made). Since this is true, the believer who has God's Word abiding in him, will broaden his prayer life, and ask God to also help him:

- Develop Christian character (1 Pet. 1:7 - faith; James 1:3 - patience; Job 23:10)
- Bring forth more fruit (John 15:2)
- Get rid of self and pride (2 Cor. 1:4 12:7)
- Experience God's grace (2 Cor. 12:9) and peace (John 14:27)
- Learn of God's consolation or comfort (2 Cor. 1:7-10; Ps. 119:50),
- Deepen his own prayer life (Ps. 119:107; 153)
- Help him cling to the promises of His Word (Ps. 119:71)
- Keep him from straying (Ps. 119:61; Jam. 5:15)
- Help him to understand God's providence (Ps. 119:75; Rom. 8:28)
- Give him opportunities to proclaim Christ (Phil. 1:12)
- Bring about God's will in his life (1 Pet. 4:19)

- Glorify God (John 11:4)
- Teach him contentment (Phil. 4:11).

The abiding believer (John 15:7) prays in many different ways. This is because his praying is done according to truth and not selfishly without consideration of God's will.

James 4:3 declares that many Christians pray selfishly.

“Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”

Eliza M. Hickok wrote:

“I know not by what methods rare,
 But this I know: God answers prayer.
 I know not if the blessing sought
 Will come in just the guise I thought.
 I leave my prayer to him alone
 Whose will is wiser than my own.”

God does promise to answer our prayers and petitions when we pray in accordance with the truth of His Word which is His perfect will for our lives. We must allow the Scriptures to guide our thinking and praying. The Bible is the Christian's prayer book. One again, when the abiding believer prays for something (“what ye will” - John 15:7), he will not pray selfishly or with tunnel vision (only one way), but will pray in accordance with God's over-all plan and purpose for his life, as revealed in Scripture, and will receive answers to his prayers in many different ways. Remember that the abiding believer is sensitive to God's truth and will for his life in every situation. Knowing the truth will enable us to pray intelligently, according to God's Word and purpose for our lives, so that we can expect answers to our prayers.

Dr. Lehman Strauss once said:

“The Word must be implanted in the heart, meditated upon, and obeyed. It is then, and only then, that our prayers are formed in accordance with the will of God. It is easy to deceive ourselves in this.”

So how do we really pray according to God's will? In order to pray effectively and according to God's will, we must know what the Scriptures say on a given subject or practice (Rom. 4:3; 2 Tim. 2:15). We must test our praying and ask ourselves these questions. Is what I am praying about right or wrong? Am I praying for something that is Biblically true, or am I praying for something that is motivated by my selfishness or flesh (James 4:3)? Am I praying with God's broader promises in view (2 Cor. 1:20 – "all the promises of God") and looking for answered prayer from the various different promises that God has given to me?

After answering these questions honestly, you can incorporate the truth of God's Word into your prayer life in a very practical way, and get answers to your prayers. You can use Scripture while praying and align your prayers with the truth of God's Word. Thus, you can pray according to the truth of God's Word and God's will for some given situation at hand. Furthermore, when we don't know what God's will might be for a specific situation (job change, new school, move, healing, etc.) then we must pray confidently petitioning God to answer in the way that we pray (James 1:6), but also pray for comfort, peace, added grace, and strength, knowing that God sometimes answers in different ways. In the end we must say, "Lord, Thy will be done in this situation." This is called turning it over to Jesus!

Dearly beloved, we can't pray according to God's will unless we get away from selfish praying and align our prayers with God's Word. Likewise, we must pray always leaving the outcome in God's will and hands. The reason is because we do not always know what is best for our lives! One thing is certain. Effective prayer is based on the Word of God remaining in believers. Christ's condition to pray according to His Word (John 15:7) means that the Bible is to control a believer's mind, so that his prayers conform to the Father's will. When the believer's prayer is in accord with God's will, the results are certain - it will be given to him (John 15:7; 1 John 5:14-15). In this way we can be assured of answered prayer. God always honors the truth of His Word. Claiming the promises and principles of His Word during our time of prayer assures us of answered prayer.

One thing is certain. Whenever our requests on earth line up with God's will in Heaven (Matt. 6:10), we will receive answers to our

petitions (1 John 5:14). This is the promise of God. This should encourage us to keep praying and discovering God's will for our lives. Christian living and prayer is an exciting adventure in discovering the will of God for our lives. As we pray and receive answers to prayer, we will be encouraged in our Christian life. However, only as we pray Biblically or Scripturally can we discover God's perfect will for our lives. We must get the truth of God's Word into our hearts and be willing to surrender to His will. This is where the rubber meets the road.

"Have Thine own way, Lord!
Have Thine own way!
Thou art the Potter;
I am the clay.
Mould me and make me
After Thy will,
While I am waiting,
Yielded and still."

Let us never forget that God cannot reveal His will to us if we don't surrender our own selfish will to Him (Rom. 12:1-2). Furthermore, God cannot answer the prayers of His saints when they are in open rebellion against Him (Ps. 66:18). An effective prayer life demands that we have a right relationship with God (James 4:8), with other people (1 Pet. 3:7), and with ourselves (Ps. 139:23). If anything goes wrong in these areas, we can be sure that our prayer life will suffer and that our prayers will not reach unto Heaven (2 Chron. 30:27) and be accepted by God (Ps. 6:9). If we want our prayers to get through to Heaven, we must obey God and do what is right. Dear friend, why should God listen to us if we don't want to listen to Him? Surrendering to God's will in both our personal living and time of prayer is the key to answered prayer. God must always have His rightful place on the throne of our heart.

In a state of unbelief, a man in Providence, Rhode Island began to pray. It occurred to him that he could say the prayer that the Lord gave to His disciples. So he began, "Our Father which art in heaven." He said as soon as he uttered the words, he was convicted of his hypocrisy in calling God his Father. When he added the petition, "Hallowed be thy name," he said it almost shocked him. He saw that he was not sincere, that these words did not at all express the state

of his mind. He did not care to have God's name hallowed. Then he uttered the next petition, "Thy kingdom come." After saying this he almost choked. He saw that he did not want the kingdom of God to come; that it was hypocritical of him to say so, and that he could not say it, as really expressing the sincere desire of his heart. And then came the petition, "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." He said his heart rose up against that, and he could not say it.

While praying this prayer the man was brought face to face with the will of God. The same is true with all of our lives. When we pray, we are brought face to face with the will of God and must surrender to God's perfect will in every situation we face. Only when we surrender can we expect to pray properly and receive answers to our prayers.

C. Comfort

1 John 5:14-15

"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."

The third observation related to answered prayer is comfort. The believer is comforted within his Christian life when God hears and answers his prayers. This comfort is spoken of in two ways:

1. The comfort from God's attention (1 John 2:14b)

We can find comfort in the fact that God hears us with the intent to answer our petitions ("he heareth us" – vs. 14b). God wants to give us His attention and answer our prayers (Numb. 11:18; 14:28; 1 Sam. 8:21). The Lord does hear the prayers of His people. Let us never forget this.

Psalm 18:6 says:

"In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears."

Psalm 34:15

“The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.”

God hears the prayers of His people when they are in distress and as they cry out for His help. Our Bible verse in 1 John 5:15 teaches that God hears and answers prayer that is in agreement with His sovereign purpose or plan for the lives of His children. God wants to answer our prayers. This is His desire and longing. God is not some kind of cosmic killjoy that is way up yonder in Heaven who is trying to avoid us. This is not what God is like. God is interested in our lives and He wants to intervene and bless our daily lives with answered prayer.

Jeremiah 33:3

“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”

Phillips Brooks once said:

“If man is man and God is God, to live without prayer is not merely an awful thing; it is an infinitely foolish thing.”

2. The comfort from God’s answer (James 5:15)

We can also find comfort in the fact that God does answer prayer (“we have the petitions” - James 5:15). When the text says “we have the petitions that we desired of him” it means that God has placed the right desires in our hearts, which align with His will, so we might receive the petitions we asked about (Ps. 37:4).

All of us as Christians have experienced joy, blessing, and comfort which come from answered prayer. Have we thanked God for answered prayer? When was the last time you thanked the Lord for answering your prayers? I receive great comfort and joy in answered prayer. When God chooses to answer our prayers we should give Him praise for His goodness and showers of blessing (Ps. 92:1). God always does answer prayer. Sometimes God answers in the way we petition Him, and other times, He answers in a different way. But one thing is certain. God does answer prayer.

James Gilmour, a missionary to Mongolia, was once asked to treat some wounded soldiers. Although he was not a doctor, he did have some knowledge of first aid, so he felt he could not refuse the request. He dressed the wounds of two of the men, but a third had a badly broken thigh bone. The missionary had no idea what to do for such an injury. Kneeling beside the man, he asked the Lord for help. He didn't know how God would answer his prayers, but he was confident that his need would be supplied. He couldn't find any books on physiology in the primitive hospital, and no doctor arrived. To complicate matters, a crowd of beggars came to him asking for money.

Gilmour was deeply concerned about his patient, yet his heart went out to those ragged paupers. Hurriedly, he gave them a small gift, plus a few kind words of spiritual admonition. A moment later he stared in amazement at one weary beggar who had remained behind. The half-starved fellow was little more than a living skeleton. The missionary suddenly realized that the Lord had brought him a walking lesson in anatomy! He asked the elderly man if he might examine him. After carefully tracing the femur bone with his fingers to learn how to treat the soldier's broken leg, he returned to the patient and was able to set the fracture. Years afterward, Gilmour often related how God had provided him with a strange, yet sufficient response to his earnest prayer.

What else can we say but this: "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1).