

1 John 5:15 Commentary

PREVIOUS

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FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN
Click chart to enlarge
Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
Another Overview Chart - [1 John](#) - Charles Swindoll

BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP		BEHAVIOR OF FELLOWSHIP	
Conditions of Fellowship	Cautions of Fellowship	Fellowship Characteristics	Fellowship Consequences
Meaning of Fellowship 1 Jn 1:1-2:27		Manifestations of Fellowship 1 Jn 2:28-5:21	
Abiding in God's Light		Abiding in God's Love	
Written in Ephesus			
circa 90 AD			
From Talk Thru the Bible			

STUDY GUIDE

1 JOHN 5

What is this? On the photograph of the Observation Worksheet for this chapter you will find handwritten 5W/H questions (Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?) on each verse to help you either personally study or lead a discussion on this chapter. The questions are generally very simple and are stated in such a way as to stimulate you to observe the text to discern the answer. As a reminder, given the truth that your ultimate Teacher is the Holy Spirit, begin your time with God with prayer such as Psalm 119:12+

"Blessed are You, O LORD; Teach me Your statutes." (you can vary it with similar prayers - Ps 119:18, 26, 33, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 135, 171, etc) The questions are generally highlighted in yellow and the answers in green. Some questions have no answers and are left to your observations and the illuminating/teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. Some qualifying thoughts - (1) Use "As is" - these are handwritten and will include mistakes I made, etc. (2) They may not be the best question for a given verse and my guess is that on some verses you will think of a far superior 5W/H question and/or many other questions.

Dr Howard Hendricks once gave an assignment to his seminary students to list as many observations as they could from Acts 1:8. He said "So far they've come up with more than 600 different ones! Imagine what fun you could have with 600 observations on this passage. Would you like to see Scripture with eyes like that?" (P. 63 [Living by the Book](#) - borrow) With practice you can! And needless to say, you will likely make many more observations and related questions than I recorded on the pages below and in fact I pray that the Spirit would indeed lead you to discover a veritable treasure chest of observations and questions! In Jesus' Name. Amen

Why am I doing this? **Mortimer Adler** among others helped me develop a questioning mindset as I read, seeking to read actively rather than passively. Over the years I have discovered that as I have practiced reading with a 5W/H questioning mindset, it has yielded more accurate interpretation and the good fruit of meditation. In other words, consciously interacting with the inspired Holy Word of God and the illuminating Holy Spirit has honed my ability to meditate on the Scripture, and my prayer is that this tool will have the same impact in your spiritual life. The benefits of meditation are literally priceless in regard to their value in this life and in the life to come (cf discipline yourself for godliness in 1Ti 4:8+.) For some of the benefits - see Joshua 1:8+ and Psalm 1:2-3+. It will take diligence and mental effort to develop an "inductive" ([especially an "observational"](#)), interrogative mindset as you read God's Word, but it bears repeating that the benefits in this life and the rewards in the next will make it more than worth the effort you invest! Dear Christian reader let me encourage you to strongly consider learning the skills of [inductive Bible study](#) and spending the rest of your life practicing them on the Scriptures and living them out in your daily walk with Christ.

Although Mortimer Adler's advice is from a secular perspective, his words are worth pondering...

Strictly, all reading is active. What we call passive is simply less active. Reading is better or worse according as it is more or less active. And one reader is better than another in proportion as he is capable of a greater range of activity in reading. (Adler's classic book [How to Read a Book is free online](#))

[John Piper](#) adds that "Insight or understanding is the product of intensive, headache-producing meditation on two or three verses and how they fit together. This kind of reflection and rumination is provoked by asking questions of the text. And you cannot do it if you hurry. Therefore, we must resist the deceptive urge to carve notches in our bibliographic gun. Take two hours to ask ten questions of Galatians 2:20+ and you will gain one hundred times the insight you would have attained by reading thirty pages of the New Testament or any other book. Slow down. Query. Ponder. Chew.... (John Dewey rightly said) "People only truly think when they are confronted with a problem. Without some kind of dilemma to stimulate thought, behavior becomes habitual rather than thoughtful."

"Asking questions is the key to understanding."

--Jonathan Edwards

That said, below are the [5W/H questions](#) for each verse in this chapter (click page to enlarge). This is not neatly typed but is handwritten and was used for leading a class discussion on this chapter, so you are welcome to use it in this "as is" condition...



1 John 5:15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him:

Greek - kai ean oidamen (1PRAI) hoti akouei (3SPAI) emon ho ean aitometha (1PPMS) oidamen (1PRAI) hoti echomen (1PPAI) ta aitemata a ethkamen (1PRAI) ap autou:

Amplified - And if (since) we [positively] know that He listens to us in whatever we ask, we also know [with settled and absolute knowledge] that we have [granted us as our present possessions] the requests made of Him.

Wuest - And if we know with an absolute knowledge that He hears us, whatever we are asking for ourselves, we know with an absolute knowledge that we have the things which we have asked from Him.

KJV 1 John 5:15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that

we desired of him.

BGT 1 John 5:15 καὶ ὁ ὄψων τὸ ἐμὸν ἄκουσον, ὁ ὄψων τὸ ἵκεται τὸ ἵκεται πρὸς αὐτόν.

NET 1 John 5:15 And if we know that he hears us in regard to whatever we ask, then we know that we have the requests that we have asked from him.

CSB 1 John 5:15 And if we know that He hears whatever we ask, we know that we have what we have asked Him for.

ESV 1 John 5:15 And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

NIV 1 John 5:15 And if we know that he hears us--whatever we ask--we know that we have what we asked of him.

NLT 1 John 5:15 And since we know he hears us when we make our requests, we also know that he will give us what we ask for.

NRS 1 John 5:15 And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have obtained the requests made of him.

NJB 1 John 5:15 And if we know that he listens to whatever we ask him, we know that we already possess whatever we have asked of him.

NAB 1 John 5:15 And if we know that he hears us in regard to whatever we ask, we know that what we have asked him for is ours.

YLT 1 John 5:15 and if we have known that He doth hear us, whatever we may ask, we have known that we have the requests that we have requested from Him.

MIT 1 John 5:15 If we know he hears us with reference to whatever we ask, we know we have the things requested from him.

GWN 1 John 5:15 We know that he listens to our requests. So we know that we already have what we ask him for.

BBE 1 John 5:15 And if we are certain that he gives ear to all our requests, we are equally certain that we will get our requests.

RSV 1 John 5:15 And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have obtained the requests made of him.

NKJ 1 John 5:15 And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

ASV 1 John 5:15 and if we know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of him.

DBY 1 John 5:15 And if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of him.

NIRV 1 John 5:15 If we know that God hears what we ask for, we know that we have it.

RWB 1 John 5:15 And if we know that he heareth us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired from him.

- **if:** Pr 15:29 Jer 15:12,13
- **we know:** Mk 11:24 Lu 11:9,10
- [1 John 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

Proverbs 15:8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight.

Proverbs 15:29 The LORD is far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous.

Proverbs 21:13 He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor Will also cry himself and not be answered.

Proverbs 28:9 He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, Even his prayer is an abomination.

John 9:31 "We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing, and does His will, He hears him.

James 4:3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

1 John 3:21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

1 Peter 3:7 You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

Psalm 66:18 If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear;

Isaiah 59:2 But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear.

ASSURANCE IN PRAYER

And if we know (eido/oida perfect tense) **that He hears** ([akouo](#) present tense) **us in whatever we ask** ([aito](#) present tense - persistently pray), **we know** (eido/oida perfect tense) **that we have** (echo present tense) **the requests** ([aitema](#)) **which we have asked** ([aito](#)) **from Him** - **IF** introduces a first class conditional statement -- assumed to be true, i.e., we know intuitively, beyond a shadow of a doubt that He hears us. Both uses of **Know** are in the perfect tense which conveys the sense that we know with settled, intuitive knowledge. There is no doubt that the Father hears and we have! Our confidence in 1Jn 5:14 is fully justified! Amazing truth! **Hears** ([akouo](#) present tense) in this context means not only that God hears our voice but that He listens with divine attention. This is an amazing thought that God listens to us! Why are we so reticent to talk to Him (speaking from personal experience)? **We have** (echo) is not future tense (we will have) but in the present tense which means we have the requests as our present, continual possession. We can possess them by faith, even if we have not yet received them. As **Hiebert** says "Their actual reception may not be immediately experienced, or their actual bestowal may be gradually realized in subsequent experience."[\(1 John\)](#)

*'Our petitions are granted at once:
the results of the granting are perceived in the future'*
-- Plummer

John Stott - The **present tense we have**, echomen ('we have obtained', RSV) is striking, and reminiscent of Mark 11:24 (*"Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be [granted] you."*) where we are told to believe we did receive what we request, and so it shall be.

Hiebert says **whatever we ask** "widens the possible scope of Christian praying to anything in God's will that will further the divine cause. Having submitted his will to God's will, the believer feels at liberty to make any request, however unusual, which he knows to be in God's will and purpose." [\(1 John\)](#)

David Smith - An amplification of the second limitation (The promise is not "He grants it" but "He hears us". He answers in His own way. 1Jn 5:14b). "We have our requests" not always as we pray but as we would pray were we wiser. God gives not what we ask but what we really need... Prayer is not dictation to God.

Warren Wiersbe - John does not write, "We shall have the requests," but, "We know that we have the requests" (cf. 1 John 5:15). The verb is present tense. We may not see the answer to a prayer immediately, but we have inner confidence that God has answered. This confidence, or faith, is "the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). It is God witnessing to us that He has heard and answered. What breathing is to a physical man, prayer is to a spiritual man. If we do not pray, we "faint" (Luke 18:1). Prayer is not only the utterance of the lips; it is also the desire of the heart. "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thes. 5:17) does not mean that a Christian is always saying an audible prayer. We are not heard for our much speaking (Matt. 6:7). No, "Pray without ceasing" suggests the attitude of the heart as well as the words of the lips. A Christian who has his heart fixed on Christ and is trying to glorify Him is praying constantly even when he is not conscious of it. [\(Bible Exposition Commentary \)](#)

*We may not actually see it for many years,
but it's as good as done.*

Steven Cole comments that "The idea of 1Jn 5:15 is that we know that we presently have whatever we have asked in accord with

His will. We may not actually see it for many years, but it's as good as done. Abraham prayed for a son and God promised to give him that son. But it was 25 years before Abraham held Isaac in his arms. There is much in Scripture about waiting on God. So we would be mistaken to think that God is promising that if we pull the prayer lever, all the goodies instantly come out of the chute. Sometimes in His purpose and wisdom, God delays the answers to our prayers for years. Yet, in another sense, He has already granted the requests. Usually, we should continue praying until the request is actually granted (Lk 18:1-8). At other times (I can't give you a rule for this), you should stop praying and begin thanking God, even though you haven't yet received what you were praying for." ([Confidence and Carefulness in Prayer](#))

Know (1492)(**eido** in the [perfect tense](#) = **oida**) means speaks not of experiential knowledge, but of absolute, beyond a shadow of a doubt knowledge. It means to know with a settled, absolute, intuitive knowledge. **Eido/oida** is distinguished from [ginosko](#) because **ginosko** generally refers to knowledge obtained by experience or "experiential knowledge". **Eido/oida** often refers more to an intuitive knowledge, although this distinction is not always clear cut. Generally speaking, **eido/oida** is not so much that which is known by experience as an intuitive insight that is drilled into one's heart. **Eido/oida** is knowledge that is characterized by assurance, something known with certainty. **Eido/oida** is an intuitive knowledge which in the case of believers can only be given by the Holy Spirit. In sum, for believers **eido/oida** suggests Spirit given fullness of knowledge, absolute knowledge (that which is without a doubt), rather than a progress in knowledge (cp [ginosko](#)).

EIDO IN JOHN'S EPISTLES - MOST USES (5) ARE FOUND IN CHAPTER 5 - 1 Jn. 2:11; 1 Jn. 2:20; 1 Jn. 2:21; 1 Jn. 2:29; 1 Jn. 3:2; 1 Jn. 3:5; 1 Jn. 3:14; 1 Jn. 3:15; 1 Jn. 5:13; 1 Jn. 5:15; 1 Jn. 5:18; 1 Jn. 5:19; 1 Jn. 5:20; 3 Jn. 1:12;

Requests (155)(**aitema**) refers to the things asked, the petitions, the requests. The only other use is by Paul "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your **requests** be made known to God." (Phil 4:6)

Ask (154) **aiteo** means to ask for something or make petition. It can mean to ask with a sense of urgency and even to the point of demanding. **Aiteo** is never used to describe Jesus' prayers to His Father. **Aiteo** means to ask for, with a claim on receipt of an answer. As noted **aiteo** more frequently suggests attitude of a suppliant, that is, of the petition of one who is lesser in position than he to whom the petition is made, as of men in asking something from God (Mt 7:7, Jas 1:5 1Jn 3:22), as of a child from a parent (Mt 7:9-10), as of a subject from a king (Acts 12:20), as of priests and people from Pilate (Lu 23:23) or finally as of a beggar from a passer by (Acts 3:2).

ILLUSTRATION - H A Ironside - We may not get the answer to our petitions immediately, we may not see our prayers answered on the moment, but if in accordance with the will of God, if in fellowship with God as we bring the petition, we may be definitely assured that He has heard and has answered, and that sometime, somewhere, we shall see the answer. Of course, we have to remember our human limitations, for we do not know always what is wise or best, and therefore we must be prepared to find that the answer sometimes comes in a way we least expect it.

Some day when we get home to heaven, we shall see that many of the prayers we thought God had not heard were answered in His own wonderful way.

We remember the incident of the Christian man who was the only one saved from a wrecked vessel after a storm at sea. He found himself cast upon a little island, and by great effort got certain materials together and managed to make a little shelter from the equatorial storms. He waited day after day praying God to send a ship to succor him, and he used to go down to the shore of the little island and wave a signal, just a piece of his clothing, every time he saw a ship passing in the distance, but some way or another they never saw him. One day as he was cooking his dinner, he beheld a ship some distance away and hurried to the shore, earnestly praying that this time they might see and come to his relief. He waved frantically, but they went by, until at last the little vessel was almost lost to sight. Then turning to plod his way back to his little hut he was astonished to see that it had burst into flames. He had left some embers, and the wind had set the place on fire. Everything burned, and then when at last he stood there utterly distressed, not knowing where he would be able to gather sufficient material to build another shelter, to his amazement he saw that the vessel was headed right for the island. As they neared the shore they sent a little boat for him and took him on board. He asked, "Did you see my signal?" "Your signal!" they said; "Yes, we saw your smoke, and so we came to rescue you." God had answered prayer, but not at all in the way he expected it, and so, some day when we get home to heaven, we shall see that many of the prayers we thought God had not heard were answered in His own wonderful way.

Robert J Morgan - The Bible is full of facts about prayer; it's the world's greatest textbook on the subject. Here, near the end of

Scripture, are two verses that seem to sum up the subject—1 John 5:14-15. Notice the sustained repetition that drives this passage into our hearts.

- This is the confidence... we know... we know.
- Whenever we ask... whatever we ask.
- Anything according to His will.
- He hears... He hears... we have.

Archbishop Trench said, “We must not conceive of prayer as an overcoming of God’s reluctance but as a laying hold of His highest willingness.” It’s great to pray spontaneously throughout the day, before meetings, at stressful times, prior to responding in tense situations. But we need a regular time each morning and/or evening for a daily scheduled appointment with God. There we praise Him, confess our sins to Him, and bring to Him our needs. God often says yes to our requests. Sometimes it’s no or wait. But this is our confidence: He hears.... He hears.... We know.... We have.

When God Says No

- Abraham earnestly prayed that Ishmael would become the son of promise and the heir of his legacy, but God said no. He had something better, a line of descent through the boy Isaac.
- Moses earnestly prayed to cross the river Jordan with the children of Israel, but God said no. He had a younger leader named Joshua and a better promised land for the aged Moses.
- David prayed earnestly for the joy of building a temple to the Lord, but God said no. He had something better—for David to plan the project and for his son Solomon to do the work.
- Jonah prayed earnestly that he would die, but God said no. He had something better—for Jonah to learn the lessons of compassion and write it down in a book that would thrill the ages.
- The healed demonic in Mark 5 prayed that he could travel around as a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth, but the Lord said no. He had something better—that he go home to his friends and tell them what great things the Lord had done for him and had shown him mercy.
- The apostle Paul prayed earnestly to be healed from his disease, which he described as a thorn in the flesh. But God said no. He had something better—for Paul to discover the all-sufficiency of His grace.
- Jesus prayed earnestly that the cup of suffering would pass from Him, but God said no. He had something better—that a fountain would be opened for all the world for the forgiveness of sin. ([100 Bible Verses Everyone Should Know](#))

*I never prayed sincerely for anything,
but it came, at some time... somehow, in some shape.*

—Adoniram Judson

Related Resources:

- [Devotional on Prayer](#)
- [Guide to Praying for Missionaries](#)
- [Pithy Prayer Phrases](#)
- [Prayer - Greek Words for Prayer](#)
- [Prayer Devotionals and Illustrations](#)
- [Prayer Hymns and Poems](#)
- [Prayer Quotes](#)
- [Praying in the Spirit](#)
- [Spurgeon's Gems on Prayer](#)
- [certainty; prayer, and God's will; asking](#)

ILLUSTRATION - Charles Spurgeon, the famous preacher, was working hard on a message but was unable to complete it. It grew late and his wife said, “Why don’t you go to bed. I’ll wake you up early and you can finish your sermon in the morning.” Spurgeon dozed off and in his sleep began to preach the sermon that was giving him so much trouble! His wife wrote down what he said and the next morning gave her preacher-husband the notes. “Why, that’s exactly what I wanted to say!” exclaimed the surprised preacher. The message had been in his heart; it had simply needed expression.

*Prayer keeps a Christian in the will of God and living in the will of God
keeps a Christian in the place of blessing and service.*

So with prayer: if we are abiding in Christ, the very desires of our heart are heard by God whether we voice them or not.

The pages of the Bible and the pages of history are filled with reports of answered prayer. Prayer is not spiritual self-hypnosis. Nor do we pray because it makes us feel better. We pray because God has commanded us to pray and because prayer is the God-appointed means for a believer to receive what God wants to give him. Prayer keeps a Christian in the will of God and living in the will of God keeps a Christian in the place of blessing and service. We are not beggars; we are children coming to a wealthy Father who loves to give His children what they need.

Though He was God in the flesh, Jesus depended on prayer. He lived on earth, as we must, in dependence on the Father. He arose early in the morning to pray (Mark 1:35), though He had been up late the night before healing the multitudes. He sometimes spent all night in prayer (Luke 6:12). In the Garden of Gethsemane, He prayed with "strong crying and tears" (Heb. 5:7). On the cross He prayed three times. If the sinless Son of God needed to pray, how much more do we?

The most important thing about prayer is the will of God. We must take time to ascertain what God's will is in a matter, especially searching in the Bible for promises or principles that apply to our situation. Once we know the will of God, we can pray with confidence and then wait for Him to reveal the answer. [Bible Exposition Commentary](#)

F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily - We know that we have. - 1 John 5:15

This Epistle is full of certainty. It rings with the words we know. And in these words we are taught that we may be certain in the region of prayer. Probably there is no region of the Christian life concerning which there is more uncertainty than this of prayer. Perhaps this is also the reason why there is so little prayer. Men doubt the use of spending time in shooting arrows, a very small percentage of which seem to strike the target.

The first condition in true prayer is to be sure that it is according to the will of God. - It is not difficult to do this when we base prayer on a promise. And this is what we should do to secure definiteness and assurance. There is nothing that pleases our Father more in His praying children than that they should bring His promises to Him for fulfillment, saying, "Do as Thou hast said." But in cases where there is no promise to guide us we shall discover His will as we pray.

The next condition is to believe that God is listening. - We need not pray long to know this. Only be quiet and silent before Him, and a blessed sense, induced by the Holy Spirit, will pervade your heart and mind, that you are literally speaking into the ear and heart of your Heavenly Father, who is listening as intently as if He had nothing else to attend to in all the universe.

The third condition is to be sure that the thing we asked is granted. - It may not have come to hand, and it may not come in the precise form in which we sought it, but it is ours. We must dare to believe that we have that petition, labelled with our name, consigned to us, perhaps started on its way to us, although it may take years to come.

Andrew Murray. [With Christ in the School of Prayer](#) = 'If we ask according to His will; 1 John 5:14-15. Or, Our Boldness in Prayer.

'And this is the boldness which we have toward Him, that, if we ask anything 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 which we have asked of Him.'-1 John 5:14-15.

ONE of the greatest hindrances to believing prayer is with many undoubtedly this: they know not if what they ask is according to the will of God. As long as they are in doubt on this point, they cannot have the boldness to ask in the assurance that they certainly shall receive. And they soon begin to think that, if once they have made known their requests, and receive no answer, it is best to leave it to God to do according to His good pleasure. The words of John, 'If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us,' as they understand them, make certainty as to answer to prayer impossible, because they cannot be sure of what really may be the will of God. They think of God's will as His hidden counsel-how should man be able to fathom what really may be the purpose of the all-wise God.

This is the very opposite of what John aimed at in writing thus. He wished to rouse us to boldness, to confidence, to full assurance of faith in prayer. He says, 'This is the boldness which we have toward Him,' that we can say: Father! Thou knowest and I know that I ask according to Thy will: I know Thou hearest me. 'This is the boldness, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us.' On this account He adds at once: 'If we know that He heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know,' through this faith, that we have,' that we now while we pray receive 'the petition,' the special things, 'we have asked of Him.' John supposes that when we pray, we first find out if our prayers are according to the will of God. They may be according to God's will, and yet not come at once, or without the persevering prayer of faith. It is to give us courage thus to persevere and to be strong in faith, that He tells us: This gives us

boldness or confidence in prayer, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us. It is evident that if it be a matter of uncertainty to us whether our petitions be according to His will, we cannot have the comfort of what he says, 'We know that we have the petitions which we have asked of Him.'

But just this is the difficulty. More than one believer says: 'I do not know if what I desire be according to the will of God. God's will is the purpose of His infinite wisdom: it is impossible for me to know whether He may not count something else better for me than what I desire, or may not have some reasons for withholding what I ask.' Every one feels how with such thoughts the prayer of faith, of which Jesus said, 'Whosoever shall believe that these things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith,' becomes an impossibility. There may be the prayer of submission, and of trust in God's wisdom; there cannot be the prayer of faith. The great mistake here is that God's children do not really believe that it is possible to know God's will. Or if they believe this, they do not take the time and trouble to find it out. What we need is to see clearly in what way it is that the Father leads His waiting, teachable child to know that his petition is according to His will. (1.9) It is through God's holy word, taken up and kept in the heart, the life, the will; and through God's Holy Spirit, accepted in His indwelling and leading, that we shall learn to know that our petitions are according to His will.

Through the word. There is a secret will of God, with which we often fear that our prayers may be at variance. It is not with this will of God, but His will as revealed in His word, that we have to do in prayer. Our notions of what the secret will may have decreed, and of how it might render the answers to our prayers impossible, are mostly very erroneous. Childlike faith as to what He is willing to do for His children, simply keeps to the Father's assurance, that it is His will to hear prayer and to do what faith in His word desires and accepts. In the word the Father has revealed in general promises the great principles of His will with His people. The child has to take the promise and apply it to the special circumstances in His life to which it has reference. Whatever he asks within the limits of that revealed will, he can know to be according to the will of God, and he may confidently expect. In His word, God has given us the revelation of His will and plans with us, with His people, and with the world, with the most precious promises of the grace and power with which through His people He will carry out His plans and do His work. As faith becomes strong and bold enough to claim the fulfilment of the general promise in the special case, we may have the assurance that our prayers are heard: they are according to God's will. Take the words of John in the verse following our text as an illustration: 'If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and God will give him life.' Such is the general promise; and the believer who pleads on the ground of this promise, prays according to the will of God, and John would give him boldness to know that he has the petition which he asks.

But this apprehension of God's will is something spiritual, and must be spiritually discerned. It is not as a matter of logic that we can argue it out: God has said it; I must have it. Nor has every Christian the same gift or calling. While the general will revealed in the promise is the same for all, there is for each one a special different will according to God's purpose. And herein is the wisdom of the saints, to know this special will of God for each of us, according to the measure of grace given us, and so to ask in prayer just what God has prepared and made possible for each. It is to communicate this wisdom that the Holy Ghost dwells in us. The personal application of the general promises of the word to our special personal needs, it is for this that the leading of the Holy Spirit is given us.

It is this union of the teaching of the word and Spirit that many do not understand, and so there is a twofold difficulty in knowing what God's will may be. Some seek the will of God in an inner feeling or conviction, and would have the Spirit lead them without the word. Others seek it in the word, without the living leading of the Holy Spirit. The two must be united: only in the word, only in the Spirit, but in these most surely, can we know the will of God, and learn to pray according to it. In the heart the word and the Spirit must meet: it is only by indwelling that we can experience their teaching. The word must dwell, must abide in us: heart and life must day by day be under its influence. Not from without, but from within, comes the quickening of the word by the Spirit. It is only he who yields himself entirely in his whole life to the supremacy of the word and the will of God, who can expect in special cases to discern what that word and will permit him boldly to ask. And even as with the word, just so with the Spirit: if I would have the leading of the Spirit in prayer to assure me what God's will is, my whole life must be yielded to that leading; so only can mind and heart become spiritual and capable of knowing God's holy will. It is he who, through word and Spirit, lives in the will of God by doing it, who will know to pray according to that will in the confidence that He hears us.

Would that Christians might see what incalculable harm they do themselves by the thought that because possibly their prayer is not according to God's will, they must be content without an answer. God's word tells us that the great reason of unanswered prayer is that we do not pray aright: 'Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss.' In not granting an answer, the Father tells us that there is something wrong in our praying. He wants to teach us to find it out and confess it, and so to educate us to true believing and prevailing prayer. He can only attain His object when He brings us to see that we are to blame for the withholding of the answer; our aim, or our faith, or our life is not what it should be. But this purpose of God is frustrated as long as we are content to say: It is perhaps because my prayer is not according to His will that He does not hear me. O let us no longer throw the blame of our

unanswered prayers on the secret will of God, but on our praying amiss. Let that word, 'Ye receive not because ye ask amiss,' be as the lantern of the Lord, searching heart and life to prove that we are indeed such as those to whom Christ gave His promises of certain answers. Let us believe that we can know if our prayer be according to God's will. Let us yield our heart to have the word of the Father dwell richly there, to have Christ's word abiding in us. Let us live day by day with the anointing which teacheth us all things. Let us yield ourselves unreservedly to the Holy Spirit as He teaches us to abide in Christ, to dwell in the Father's presence, and we shall soon understand how the Father's love longs that the child should know His will, and should, in the confidence that that will includes all that His power and love have promised to do, know too that He hears the petitions which we ask of Him. 'This is the boldness which we have, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us.'

'LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.' Blessed Master! With my whole heart I thank Thee for this blessed lesson, that the path to a life full of answers to prayer is through the will of God. Lord! Teach me to know this blessed will by living it, loving it, and always doing it. So shall I learn to offer prayers according to that will, and to find in their harmony with God's blessed will, my boldness in prayer and my confidence in accepting the answer.

Father! it is Thy will that Thy child should enjoy Thy presence and blessing. It is Thy will that everything in the life of Thy child should be in accordance with Thy will, and that the Holy Spirit should work this in Him. It is Thy will that Thy child should live in the daily experience of distinct answers to prayer, so as to enjoy living and direct fellowship with Thyself. It is Thy will that Thy Name should be glorified in and through Thy children, and that it will be in those who trust Thee. O my Father! let this Thy will be my confidence in all I ask.

Blessed Saviour! Teach me to believe in the glory of this will. That will is the eternal love, which with Divine power works out its purpose in each human will that yields itself to it. Lord! Teach me this. Thou canst make me see how every promise and every command of the word is indeed the will of God, and that its fulfilment is secured to me by God Himself. Let thus the will of God become to me the sure rock on which my prayer and my assurance of an answer ever rest. Amen.

NOTE

There is often great confusion as to the will of God. People think that what God wills must inevitably take place. This is by no means the case. God wills a great deal of blessing to His people, which never comes to them. He wills it most earnestly, but they do not will it, and it cannot come to them. This is the great mystery of man's creation with a free will, and also of the renewal of his will in redemption, that God has made the execution of His will, in many things, dependent on the will of man. Of God's will revealed in His promises, so much will be fulfilled as our faith accepts. Prayer is the power by which that comes to pass which otherwise would not take place. And faith, the power by which it is decided how much of God's will shall be done in us. When once God reveals to a soul what He is willing to do for it, the responsibility for the execution of that will rests with us.

Some are afraid that this is putting too much power into the hands of man. But all power is put into the hands of man in Christ Jesus. The key of all prayer and all power is His, and when we learn to understand that He is just as much with us as with the Father, and that we are also just as much one with Him as He with the Father, we shall see how natural and right and safe it is that to those who abide in Him as He in the Father, such power should be given. It is Christ the Son who has the right to ask what He will: it is through the abiding in Him and His abiding in us (in a Divine reality of which we have too little apprehension) that His Spirit breathes in us what He wants to ask and obtain through us. We pray in His Name: the prayers are really ours and as really His.

Others again fear that to believe that prayer has such power is limiting the liberty and the love of God. O if we only knew how we are limiting His liberty and His love by not allowing Him to act in the only way in which He chooses to act, now that He has taken us up into fellowship with himself-through our prayers and our faith. A brother in the ministry once asked, as we were speaking on this subject, whether there was not a danger of our thinking that our love to souls and our willingness to see them blessed were to move God's love and God's willingness to bless them. We were just passing some large water-pipes, by which water was being carried over hill and dale from a large mountain stream to a town at some distance. Just look at these pipes, was the answer; they did not make the water willing to flow downwards from the hills, nor did they give it its power of blessing and refreshment: this is its very nature. All that they could do is to decide its direction: by it the inhabitants of the town said they want the blessing there. And just so, it is the very nature of God to love and to bless. Downward and ever downward His love longs to come with its quickening and refreshing streams. But He has left it to prayer to say where the blessing is to come. He has committed it to His believing people to bring the living water to the desert places: the will of God to bless is dependent upon the will of man to say where the blessing must descend. 'Such honour have His saints.' 'And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that if we ask anything 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 which we have asked of Him.' - Andrew Murray. [With Christ in the School of Prayer](#)
