

The Resolutions of Jonathan Edwards

Resolution 29: Resolved, never to count that a prayer, nor to let that pass as a prayer, nor that as a petition of a prayer, which is so made, that I cannot hope that God will answer it; nor that as a confession, which I cannot hope God will accept.

Anchor Text: 1 John 5:14-15

Today's resolution can be a bit difficult to decipher but the overall thrust of the commitment is incredibly important as Edwards resolves here to pray in accordance with the will of God. His desire is to have meaningful, and reasonable, hope that God will answer his petitions and this flows from a desire to pray only that which is in keeping with God's revealed will in His Word.

1. A connection
 - a. I want to begin by noting that last week's resolution (resolving to study the Scriptures) and this week's resolution are intimately connected
 - b. After all, there is no way that we could have any reasonable assurance that we are praying for things that God will answer unless we know His will and we will never know His will if we do not know His Word
 - c. Part of the problem in our prayer lives is ignorance
 - i. So many folks can become disillusioned with God because they ask God for things, expecting that He would respond, but their requests are against His stated will
 - ii. This being the case, we can see that a prerequisite to a fruitful and faithful prayer life is biblical knowledge
2. A Glorious Truth
 - a. One of the most amazing and humbling assertions in the Bible is found in v. 14 where we read that God "hears us"
 - b. The term "hears" refers to a knowledge and attention to a message
 - i. There is a difference between the physical sensation of hearing something and truly listening to a request
 - ii. The idea in v. 14 is that God hears us with concern and a commitment to respond
 - c. Folks, we should never grow tired of the thought that God hears us
 - i. What a joy and privilege to speak to the Creator of the universe and the Savior of our souls with assurance that He is cognizant of us!
3. A wonderful piece of assurance
 - a. John says that we can know both that God hears us AND that God will surely grant all that we ask of Him that is in accordance with His will

- b. The language here is interesting as the Apostle tells us that we can know that we “have” (present tense) what we asked of Him
 - i. Now, we know that there is often a lag time between our prayer request and its fulfillment but John seems to be saying that we already possess what we desire
 - ii. How is this true? The answer is grounded in God’s power and character
 - 1. We “have” what we asked for in the sense that God is powerful enough to grant whatever He desires
 - 2. Nothing can get in the way of His ordained ends
 - 3. Furthermore, we “have” what we asked for because God has promised it and He cannot lie
 - 4. This means that we can rest in knowing that He will never renege on a promise and, therefore, we know that He is always going to be faithful to His Word
 - iii. These truths should inspire us to check to make sure that we are asking what is appropriate and believe, with all of our being, that He will grant us our request
- 4. An important clarification
 - a. Now, sometimes the Lord may answer prayers in ways that are different than we anticipated
 - b. I think about times that I have prayed for the healing of a brother in Christ only to see them pass or the moments that I prayed for an opportunity that never seemed to materialize
 - c. God is gracious and He is also all-knowing
 - i. We must rest in the fact that His answers don’t always materialize in the way that we think is best but that doesn’t mean He has not answered favorably
 - ii. After all, those who are in Christ ARE healed when they pass away and one opportunity (the one that I pray for) might pale in comparison to a greater opportunity that I have no knowledge of at the moment
 - iii. In these things, we must rest in the knowledge of Christ and trust that He is faithful and good