



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

1 JOHN 5:14-17 – THE NEED FOR PRAYER AND THE AWFULNESS OF SIN!

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We have a heavenly Father Who, while we were still sinners, sent His only Son Jesus Christ to die for us that we might be saved. What foreign kind of love is this?? Oh may these verses give us a sense of the holiness of God, the awfulness of sin, the lostness of everyone apart from Jesus Christ and the potential for relationship with God the Father.

I. 1 JOHN 5:14-17 – THE NEED FOR PRAYER AND THE AWFULNESS OF SIN!

(14) “And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.” (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.” (16) “If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make a request for this.” (17) “All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death.”
1 John 5:14-17

This is a very difficult passage in Scripture but also most enlightening. John again reveals the access we have to God Himself through prayer; that He will hear us and will answer us. We have a pattern from Christ Himself as He taught us how to pray. (Matthew 6, John 17) What a great and awesome privilege we have to pray for our brother and sisters and quite a serious responsibility especially in light of sin. And as John writes, may we come to an understanding of God’s permanent hatred for sin and its damaging, devastating effects. Even Benjamin Franklin observed that sin isn’t harmful because it is forbidden, rather it is forbidden because it is harmful.

A. 1 JOHN 5:14- IF WE ASK ACCORDING TO HIS WILL!

“And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.” 1 John 5:14

John uses the connecting word “and” to carry on conversation with believers, expecting their assurance of a living relationship and fellowship with God Himself to express itself in prayer that is active and ongoing. John speaks of the “confidence which we have before Him”, before God. This “confidence” refers to a freedom of speech believers have to express thoughts and desires before God without hesitancy.¹ So here John is talking about prayer.

John goes on to say we can have such incredible confidence that “if we ask anything”, which leaves the content of our prayer unrestricted in regards to our request showing the freedom believers have to approach God at anytime and anywhere.

Moreover, the text infers that the request would involve the personal interest of the one praying. But then John inserts this; “according to His will”. As MacArthur writes, this is nothing less than a blank check to ask God for anything, but it does come with one qualifier, the prayer must be according to God’s will.² Indeed that is how Jesus, God’s Son prayed before He went to the cross, “not My will but Thine be done.” (Luke 22:42)

In prayer, when we bring our heart’s desires to our Father, He has promised to not only “hear”, but to answer as we shall see in this next verse. But we must remember, it is because He loves us that He will only answer our prayers “according to His will.” So what does this mean?

B. 1 JOHN 5:15 – “WE HAVE THE REQUESTS ...”

“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.” 1 John 5:15

MacArthur says that in this text, hearing means more than just God being aware of our needs because we bring them to Him, it also means that God grants those “requests which we have asked from Him.”³ We can know God will grant the prayers we bring before Him if we ask “anything according to His will.”

So what would be God’s will and praying according to that? What is this limitation on our prayers? 1 John 3:21-22 talks about doing the things which are pleasing in God’s eyes. It’s not trying to impose our will on God but submitting to His will. His will is always what is best, and God will always do His best. And His will is clearly spelled out in Scripture! Scripture reveals the will of God to us and teaches us how to pray. Christ modeled prayer for us in Matthew 6:10, with His humble submission to the Father’s will in Luke 22:42 and we are commanded to align our will with the Father’s will in James 4:2. We pray with the goal of bringing God glory.

C. 1 JOHN 5:16 – THE EXTENT TO WHICH GOD ANSWERS!

“If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make a request for this.” 1 John 5:16

Now this is a difficult passage because John gives an important exception here regarding our prayers as he discusses “a sin not leading to death” and “a sin leading to death.” First we must note that John is referring to “his brother”, which is a fellow believer. Second, John says this believer is “committing a sin not leading to

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death". We are to ask God and *"God will for him give life."* We are to pray for the one we see sinning, or when we become aware of that one sinning. Keep in mind, John is talking about prayer according to the will of God.

Prayer is the burden of John's heart as it should be ours. Believers should be praying for other believers, continually. God wants us to be involved in their life and tells us to pray for them. 1 Samuel 12:23 says *"God forbid that I should sin in ceasing to pray for you."* We are to be actively engaged in lovingly praying for one another, especially in regards to sin. In John 17 we have our Lord's example where He prayed that we would be kept from the evil one. Christ prayed for us before He went to the cross to atone for our sins. He prayed that we would be kept from sin and deception. That deep concern was on Christ's heart for us. And Christ is our example. Do we pray like that for one another?

If you see another brother or sister in sin, if you see the failure of another Christian, is your first priority to pray for them or to gossip about them? Galatians 6:1 talks about how we are called to restore a fellow believer who is in sin. That word restore means to bring together two bones that are separated or broken so they would knit together. It is this one we restore in meekness knowing this could happen to anyone of us. Here in 1 John 5:16, we are to request, to ask that God would give this one who is sinning, *"life"*. There is always a loss with sin. We cannot think that we can just keep on sinning and get away with it. Proverbs 14:12 says that, *"There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."* We may not see the tragic results of sin, but God does. One reason why He has a permanent hatred toward sin, is because of its effects in the lives of the believers, the ones He loves. Sin will always steal life from us. Sometime read Proverbs 10:27, 11:19 or 14:27. When we see a fellow Christian in sin, John says to pray that this can turn the individual to righteousness, which is life. Remember, this is *"committing a sin not leading to death."* So what about *"a sin leading to death"*? (1 John 5:16)

Here in the last part of this verse we see a stern warning for believers. John again is referring to a known sin, the habit of one's life that is evident and seen. Since this verse is clearly talking about a believer, we know that a believer is never in

danger of losing their salvation. This would be God's ultimate discipline, where God takes the life of a believer because of the habitual, relentless practice of sin. It is God's place to determine this not ours. Hebrews 12 talks about the discipline of God for His children. God will go to great lengths to bring about repentance but there is a point when God says that is enough. And so as we pray for one another, this would be the extent of God's promise to answer prayer.

Of course God does not arbitrarily kill believers when they sin. He is a God of mercy. Remember how He dealt with King David when he sinned? Check out Psalm 51 or Psalm 118:17-18. We have a merciful and loving God. But we also have a God Who is holy and has a permanent hatred for sin. Keep in mind the lives of Moses (Numbers 20:12), Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), and issues in the church (1 Corinthians 5:5, 11:29-32)

D. 1 JOHN 5:17 – THE AWFULNESS OF SIN!

*"All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death."
1 John 5:17*

While God does not discipline every sin with death, He makes clear that every sin is a serious matter. *"All unrighteousness"* every sin is a violation of the law of God, which we are given in His Word. God does not see sin in varying degrees as we might, rather every sin is a serious matter to Him. And there will always be a loss when it comes to sin...could be a loss of friends, your marriage, your family, your life? Remember, nothing is hidden from God. He sees and knows all things.

But the message John has for us in this epistle is that God is full of grace and mercy and love. We cannot trifle with sin. But there is hope. John began his letter with the verse in 1 John 1:9, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* God made this great provision for us.

Don't think you can harbor sin and not deal with it. Sin destroys. May we not make provision for the lusts of our flesh, rather live a life that demonstrates we have been crucified with Christ, and are living a new life of holiness and purity.

¹ Hiebert, D. Edmond, *The Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary*. Bob Jones University Press: Greenville, SC, 1991. Pg. 254.

² MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary Series on 1-3 John*. Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 2007. Pg. 204.

³ MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary Series on 1-3 John*. Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 2007. Pg. 203.