

## Praying for Spiritual Life 1Jo 5:16,17

If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin *which does not lead* to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not *leading* to death. There is sin *leading* to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not *leading* to death.

I'm so glad to be here with you at Oaks today and to have the opportunity to open God's word with you. It was great to hear from the Lockwood's last week and to get to know the work that they are doing. What a mighty work it is!

This week we are going to return to the epistle of 1 John and return to our subject of prayer. Let's read starting in 1 John 5:14-17

Slide 1: Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. and if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him. If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin *which does not lead* to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not *leading* to death. There is sin *leading* to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not *leading* to death. The two verses we are focusing in on are verses 16 and 17. This is a difficult passage and one that is easy to just read right through and not dig into. That's one of the things that I like about Oaks is that you go chapter by chapter and verse by verse through whole books of the Bible. That way you can't escape the difficult parts and just camp out on your favorite parts. We get to really challenge ourselves and ask God to reveal Himself not just in the easy to understand passages but also the difficult. The reason verse 16 is so difficult is not because of the first part of the verse but because of this ominous idea that there is a sin that leads to death and we aren't supposed to pray about this sin. It is difficult to wrestle with but I hope through God's word and His spirit we will be able to see it in a clearer light.

First, we need to remember that we are looking at these two verses in the light of verse 14 and 15. God has given us an amazing promise here that whatever we pray according to His will, He hears our prayers and we have the petition we have prayed. There is this idea of a blank check that God will sign as long as we are in step with Jesus as we come to the Father. I enjoyed the illustration Craig gave two weeks ago. That we are going before the throne of God arm in arm with Jesus making a prayer request Jesus completely agrees with. When we do that God hears us and we have what we've asked for. We need to see that and be reminded of it before we look into the following verses. These verses aren't just dropped in here to bring confusion but to actually validate and show what a great privilege we have to pray and know that God is going to answer prayers and we have what we ask. The first thing in our verses today is that we need and are blessed to be able to intercede for fellow believers who are caught up in sin and not experiencing the full Christian experience and life God has provided for them. We can find ourselves muted and compromised through sin and we aren't maximizing this amazing Spirit filled life Jesus came to bring us. There is an enemy that tries to keep us from eternal life and the abundant life we should be living here in the present. Jesus put it this way.

Slide 2 John 10:10: "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." This is not just speaking of salvation and eternal life but the life we are living right now. Our enemy is trying to rob us and to diminish our joy and effectiveness in this life by getting us mixed up in sin again. Trying to put us back into chains God has freed us from. I want us to notice the noun Brother first. That's what helps us to know who John is directing these prayers towards. This all comes under the identifying word of Brother. John uses this word over and over speaking of brothers in the faith. These are already believers in Jesus and those of the household of faith. He's not speaking of the unsaved here. We of course pray for our unsaved loved ones but John is specifically saying we need to pray for the backslidden and those who are not maximizing their lives in Christ because they are caught up in sin. Peter wrote about this very thing.

Slide 3 - 2 Peter 2:20,21 "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them." We can sometimes be led by others, by our own flesh or the enemy to once again entangle ourselves in sin that Jesus has freed us from. We voluntarily put chains of bondage back on ourselves and live powerless lives that are no longer impacting and beating back the powers of darkness. We are blessed with this gift of prayer to pray for ourselves and

for others that could find themselves impotent and not living out their full identity in Christ. We get to pray and intercede that God would give them life, strength, freedom once again from compromise to live to their full potential. What a great God we have who hears these prayers and gives our brothers life! Now we move into the part of the verse you've been waiting for. What we would call 1 John 5:16c There is sin *leading* to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. Does this bring shivers down your spine? What is this sin leading to death? In your translation if it has the word "leading" it should be in italics. It's added to make the sentence easier to understand In the Greek "sin to death" there is a sin to death. It sounds quite ominous and it should. What could John be instructing us in here? John seems to be designating an area of prayer where there are limitations. John is showing us the great expanse of blessing we have in being in a relationship with God and that because we are in communion with him we can ask whatever we want and he hears and answers our petitions but in this one case God wants us to know that He has the ultimate call when it's in regard to a person's final destination and the timing of their departure. This portion of the verse seems to come down to two options. The first being that there can be someone in our lives, in our church family that has made a confession of faith, we have spent time with and seen them serve Jesus and the church. They have had great religious affections but now have walked away from the faith and are denying Jesus and the gospel. We have to remember that John uses this word brother over and over in his letter to designate a fellow believer or individual who is participating in church life. John uses the term "brother" 11 times in this epistle. We have to use that as a qualifier of who this is. The person spoken of here is the person who has walked among us and has seemingly come to salvation and has verbalized their faith and even walked in the ways of faith for a period of time but now have apostatized to such a point that God gives them over to a reprobate mind. If we remember the beginning of 1 John he spoke of these people.

Slide 4 - 1 John 2:18-19: "Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us." This would be the sin that leads to death that is spiritual death, the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, This, is the continual habitual denial of Jesus and His death, burial and resurrection. To deny the gospel message until your dying breath. This leads to eternal separation from God which is spiritual death. John is saying that there comes a time when someone has gone so far down this path of rejecting Christ that even within this great blessing of God hearing our petitions and having whatever we ask. God will not grant the request of saving that person. God reigns supreme in the outcome of this person's eternal destination and we need to be ok with that. The writer of Hebrews speaks of this sin to death. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit,

Slide 5: Hebrews 6:4, 6 NKJV "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame."

"Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?"

Hebrews 10:29 NKJV: "We have to be willing to yield to God if someone we know dies as an apostate. We should as believers pray confidently that God would save the nonbeliever because he does desire all people to be saved but not all will come under the ministry of the Holy Spirit and confess Jesus as their Lord and continue to walk with Him."

Slide 6: 2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

1 Tim 2:3,4: We do need to pray for the non-believer to be saved and we have this confidence but when it comes to a brother who has denied the faith it doesn't say we can't pray but we should know that God has the ultimate call in this case and we might not see the person reverse course before he dies. There is another option when it comes to the "sin to death". John could be speaking of a brother who has fallen back into sin and Lord decides to remove that brother from this life, not speaking of external life but of the temporal life we

are living right now. God removes this brother for the purity and integrity of the church. You can see this through-out the Bible, when God does a new work, He seems to show the seriousness of His desire for us to be “Holy as He is Holy” and that community of believers whether Israel or the church has purity within their congregations. Here are a few old testament examples.

Slide 7: Num 15:32-36 The Man Collecting Sticks on the Sabbath; Leviticus 10:1-7 The Profane Fire of Nadab and Abihu; Numbers 16:1-40 The Rebellion of Korah; Joshua 7:10-26 The Sin of Achan

One of these judgements where God decided to take someone out for purification and judgement was the first King of Israel Saul.

Slide 8: 1 Chronicles 10:13,14 So, Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the LORD, because he did not keep the word of the LORD, and also because he consulted a medium for guidance. But *he* did not inquire of the LORD; therefore, He killed him, and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse. I personally don't like the way this is phrased but it does say that God killed him. God took him out so He could put David in as king of Israel and keep the integrity of the kingdom. You might say “yes that is the Old Testament, we don't have that in the New Testament”. Well actually do remember Ananias and Sapphira? When God did a new work under the New Covenant God still has the expectation that His church would be holy. Paul spoke about another example in the Corinthian church in regards to communion.

Slide 9: 1 Cor 11:27-31 Therefore, whoever eats this bread or drinks *this* cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason, many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. Here Paul is telling us in the Corinthian church people were dying because of not coming to the communion table in a worthy manner. There is a sin even under the New Covenant that can lead to death. It's hard for us to think about sins that lead to the end of this life for the believer. What sin is it we might ask? John MacArthur puts it this way.

Slide 10: It's any sin that the Lord determines is enough for Him to take a believer out. It's not any one sin. It's not stated as a single sin. It's that sin at that time in that place that compromises the church and the testimony of Christ to the degree that He actually removes that believer. You say, “Well, that's not punishment for the believer.” No, it's protection for the church. It's protection for the integrity and purity of the gospel and the witness of the church. **John MacArthur**

So, which one is it, brother that denies the faith and dies in apostasy or the brother who finds himself in such a compromised place that God determined to remove him? I would say both. I've witnessed both. I saw this happen in High School Ministry where these sweet young people live their lives through their high school years in church confessing their faith, going on mission's trips, telling other people about Jesus and they're need for salvation. But then comes the college years, the temptations, the professors tearing apart the Bible and their lack of desire to go to church and participate in the fellowship of the saints. They then start denying the faith and go the way of the world and living for its lusts. It's been very sad to see. To the second point the last funeral I went to was for a brother who had a very passionate walk with the Lord for a long period of time, trusted in the Lord for his salvation but fell into compromise and was tempted again by drugs. He used again for just a short period of time and died. From my perspective God removed him to uphold the testimony and integrity of the church. I did pray for him but I'm not angry at God nor do I blame Him for not answering my request for this brother to repent and walk worthy of the calling of Christ. That brings us to verse 17 of 1 John 5 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not *leading* to death. John seems to place this verse so we don't get overly focused on this sin leading to death. We need to put all sin in the proper perspective and to realize that God is extremely gracious. Think about our lives and how God has given us life despite our many failures and constant disobedience. He has allowed us to have life and to have this extraordinary privilege of praying to Him and know that our prayers are heard and answered. It's only in this extreme case of the sin leading to death that we need to yield to God in our prayers and know He knows best.