

## 1 John 5:14-21

### I. The Defining Of Prayer – 1 John 5:14-15

**A. Vs. 14 – Here John talks about asking God for things, and what is involved in the process.**

1. Note that John says here that we can have “confidence” when we go before God in prayer. The word “confidence” means “free and fearless confidence”, “cheerful courage” or “boldness.” Because of our relationship with God we can go before Him freely in prayer.

2. Some teach that prayer is dependent on some special formula. They teach that is based on your faith, and that this determines God’s response. God is almost seen as a divine vending machine. Have faith, put in your request, and God must answer.

3. Jesus taught the disciples some things about prayer that are important:

A. Mt. 6:10 says “Your will be done”, meaning God’s will.

B. Mt. 7:7-11 talks about asking, seeking, and knocking, but I believe this is also tied with Mt. 6:33.

4. We must understand that persistence in prayer is not wrong. Luke 18:1-8 teaches us:

A. We are to pray – vs. 1.

B. We are to be persistent in our prayer life – vs. 5.

C. Our prayers must contain faith – vs. 8.

5. Note that John says that if we ask “according to His will”, He hears us. His will is found in His Word. We can thus pray according to the Word. Things such as salvation, healing, guidance from His Word, praying for holiness (1 Thess. 4:3-8), and other things found in Scripture is praying according to God’s Word.

6. God’s Sovereign will (His rule) will be carried out. We do not completely know the Sovereign will of God.

### **B. Vs. 15 – This verse ties to vs. 14.**

1. The prayer He hears are those which line up with His will – vs. 14.

2. We know that our prayers will be answered according to God’s will.

3. The word for “requests” means “what is or has been asked for.” It is used in Phil. 4:6 and Lk. 23:24. Thus if we want our prayers answered, we need to be walking right with God.

D. James 4:1-6 gives a good understanding why some prayers go unanswered. 2 Peter 3:1-7 shares some thoughts on this also.

E. Other hindrances to prayer being answered include sin (Ps. 66:18), differences with other believers (Mt. 5:23-25), and not abiding in Christ (Jn. 15:7).

## II. The Sin Unto Death – 1 John 5:16-17

**\*\* As we begin looking at these verses, let us note some things:**

- 1) There are sins that do not lead to death.
- 2) We can pray for others, and God will give them life.
- 3) There is sin leading to death.
- 4) John says we should not pray about that. What does he mean? We will see.
- 5) The word for sin is “harmatia”, meaning a “violation of the divine law in thought or act.” In 1 John 1:8; and 1 John 3:4,10, it speaks of the unbeliever. The sinning shows unbelief, a lost person without Christ. Does the sin that leads to death describe the unsaved? This seems unlikely, considering other places where we are told to pray for the unsaved (1 Tim. 2:6). This would contradict John’s statement of not praying for the person involved with the sin leading to death.
- 6) The possibilities are the rejection Christ as Lord and Savior or a believer’s unwillingness to deal with sin (1 Cor. 5; 1 Cor. 11:30).

### **A. Vs. 16 – John discusses an issue that involves our prayer life.**

1. John’s usage of the word “brother” in this letter seems to describe believers – 1 Jn. 2:9-11; 1 Jn. 3:10,14,15,17; 1 Jn. 4:20-21.

2. Note what others have thought about this “sin unto death” and then see what we can learn about this text:

A. E.M. Blaiklock sees this sin as a rejection of Christ. These individuals (gnostics) had made havoc of the Gospel, and were very wicked.

B. Donald Burdick sees the sin as coming from this epistle. It would describe individuals who choose to deny the Incarnation of Christ. These are “professing”, not “possessing” believers. They are not saved.

C. James Boice gives 4 possibilities to what the “sin unto death” could be:

1. Some horrible sin, which God will not pardon. Boice claims there is no NT support for this. I would agree.

2. Apostasy, a deliberate repudiation of the faith by one who once was a Christian. Passages on the gnostics from John’s letter and other NT passages are used to support this (Heb. 12:17). Boice states that true believers cannot apostatize. See also 1 Jn. 2:19; 1 Jn. 3:9.

3. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Boice disputes this by John’s use of “brother.”

4. The death of a Christian brought by God because of a Christian’s persistence in some deliberate sin – He points to Acts 5; 1 Cor. 5 and 1 Cor 11 as a reference point.

D. It could tie in with James 5:14-15.

1. Vs. 14 – A person is “sick.” It can refer to being weak in the faith (Rom. 14:1-4), or it can refer to being physically weak (2 Cor. 12:10), and physical illness (Phil. 2:26).

2. The word for “sick” in vs 14 is entirely different than the word for “sick” in vs. 15. In vs. 15 it describes someone who is weary, sick, possibly from doing ministry (Rev. 2:3). Thus, passages such as Heb. 12:3 encourage us to look to Christ so as not to be weary in the spiritual conflict we deal with.

3. According to James 5:14, the sick person is to call for the elders of the church.

4. The elders are to anoint with oil, pray over this person, and the prayer of faith (the elder’s faith) will heal the sick. The sickness could have been from overwork or sin. Sin can weary you and make you physically ill.

5. Vs. 15 tells us that if sin has been committed, it will be forgiven.

E. It could be that in the persistence of sin (1 Jn. 5), we must let the person go and allow God to deal with them as He sees fit. 1 Cor. 5 is an example of that happening.

F. I believe that both these passages, from James and 1 John, are very similar in thought for the following reasons:

1. Both writers were early church leaders.

2. Both deal with false professions and struggling Christians.

3. Their teaching overlaps in many ways.

4. Also, the passage in Heb. 12:1-9 seems to indicate that those not willing to respond to the chastening of the Lord may die.

### **III. Final Thoughts – 1 John 5:18-21**

**A. Vs. 18** is very similar to 1 Jn. 3:4-10. Those “born of God” “keep” or “guards” themselves from sinning. God keeps us from the wicked one (Eph. 6:10-19).

**B. Vs. 19** reminds us that we belong to God, and our lives are incompatible with the world system (1 Jn. 2:15-17). We are to be a lighthouse for Him (Mt. 5:13-16). The enemy controls the world only because allows him to (Eph. 2:1-2).

**C. Vs. 20** is a picture of the Incarnation. The Son of God has come to give us “understanding”, an ability to know Him. The unsaved cannot comprehend God, but the believer can (1 Cor. 2).

**D. Vs. 21** is a loving reminder – “keep yourselves from idols.”