

Session 7: The Principle and Practice of Prayer

1 John 5:14-15, “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.”

Do we really understand the provisions God has made for us in opening lines of communication to Him?

In Fellowship...In Friendship...In Time of Need....In Time of Rejoicing??

- ***The basis of prayer—God listens attentively to our prayers.***
*Greek word for “confidence”—Parresia (originally meant freedom of speech).
In God we have “freedom of speech.” He is always listening, more ready to hear than we are to pray.*
 - ❖ *We never need to force our way into His presence or compel Him to pay attention.*
 - ❖ *He is waiting for us to come.*
- ***The Principle of Prayer—To be answered, it must be in accordance with the will of God.***

In John’s writings, he laid down the “conditions” of prayer:

- ✓ ***“Obedience” is a condition of prayer.***
We receive whatever we ask because we keep His commandments (1 John 3:22)
- ✓ ***“Remaining in Christ” is a condition of prayer.***
If we abide in Him and His words abide in us, we will ask for anything and it will be done for us (John 15:7).
- ✓ ***“To pray in His (Jesus’) name” is a condition of prayer.***
If we ask anything in His name, He will do it (John 14:14).

Prayer must be in accordance with the will of God.

Jesus teaches us to pray:

‘Your will be done,’ NOT ‘Your will be changed.’

The very essence of prayer:

*Jesus himself, in the moment of His greatest agony and crisis, prayed:
‘Not what I want but what you want... Your will be done’ (Matthew 26:39).*

C.H. Dodd writes: “Prayer rightly considered is not a device for employing the resources of omnipotence to fulfill our own desires, but a means by which our desires may be redirected according to the mind of God, and made into channels for the forces of His will.”

Even the Greek philosopher and thinker, Epictetus wrote: “Have courage to look up to God and say, deal with me as you will from now on. I am as one with you; I am yours; I flinch from nothing as long as you think that it is good. Lead me where you will; put on me what clothing you will. Would you have me hold office or refuse it, stay or flee, be rich or poor? For all this I will defend you before men.”

A revelation thought: We are so apt to think that prayer is asking God for what we want, whereas true prayer is asking God for what He wants.

Prayer is not only talking to God even more, it is listening to Him.

To Pray or Not to Pray?...That is the Question!

1 John 5:16-17, "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 request for this. ¹⁷ All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death,"

Concentrate on what is simple, what is seen. This is about what is visible in the behavior of our brethren. ***The passage says, "if anyone sees his brother sinning..."***

We may have heard rumors or we may have suspicions. There may be indirect evidence that leads us to believe some attitudes may need attention, or that growth should occur at a faster rate. Such matters may or may not require some attention. But they do not fall within the teaching of John in this verse. This is about what is visible in the behavior of our brethren: "If anyone sees..."

A brother may be guilty of sin, and the sin is not visible to us. We cannot detect it; we cannot see it; we have not knowledge of it.

Only God has perfect ability to see and know all sin. So whatever this verse is about, it relates only to what is visible: "If anyone sees..."

The Bible clearly shows two "types" of sin.

1. One that is repented of and forgiven;

John has already written, back in chapter one: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," (1 John 1:9).

So sin that does not lead to death is sin we confess; sin we forsake and ask God to forgive.

When we see a brother commit a sin not unto death (the guilty one repents), our response should be, ask God to give that brother life. God will give life to the penitent brother.

The apostle James also teaches about praying for this type: "if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him [facilitate his repentance]; Let him know, that he which converts the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:19-20).

Praying for this type of sin helps your brother and can "cover a multitude of sins."

2. The second type of sin is a sin that is not repented of.

If one does not repent of any sin, that sin is not forgiven—Period! This type John refers to as a “sin unto death.” He tells us not to pray for someone who has done this. His lack of repentance means this sin will not be forgiven.

John says, "I do not say that you should pray about that." Why? Because God will not give life to one who continues in sin. "The prayer of one human being can never cancel another's free-will. If God's will does not override man's will, neither can a fellow-man's prayer. When a human will has been firmly and persistently set in opposition to the Divine will, our intercession will be of no avail. And this seems to be the meaning of "sin unto death; "willful and obstinate rejection of God's grace and persistence in unrepented sin."

Verse 16 functions to illustrate what verses 14 and 15 teach:

Asking according to His will. If you ask God to overlook sin a brother continues in, you are not asking according to His will. If you ask God to give spiritual life to one who sins unto death, you are not asking according to His will. We should never ask God to do something we know is against His will.

What we ask God should always be in harmony with His will.

- *We should never ask God to compromise; to overlook sin people continue in.*
 - *We should never ask Him to do something He has said is against His will.*
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The limitation of prayer.....

It may well be that we pray with heartfelt sincerity; but God's aim and our prayer can be frustrated by those for whom we pray.

If we pray for someone who is sick, and that person disobeys the doctors and acts foolishly, our prayer will be frustrated.

Very important:

God may urge, God may plead, God may warn, God may offer; but not even God can violate the freedom of choice which He Himself has given to us. It is often human folly (stubborn will...rebellious attitude) which frustrates our prayers and repels the grace of God.

Does that mean Satan wins? No...it means that a soul has entered into a pact with the rebellious one and chooses to be on the losing side!

If any confusion or uncertainty remains about the passage in John, refer to the book of Jeremiah.

"Therefore, do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them, nor make intercession to Me; for I will not hear you," (Jer. 7:16).

Why? Look back in Jeremiah 7, and find the list of their transgressions in verses 6-11. The people were guilty of oppression, shedding innocent blood, theft, murder, adultery,

*lying, idolatry and other sins. While practicing all this iniquity they would "come and stand" before God in His house and claim they were permitted to do such things (see verse 10). God spoke to them about their rebellion, but they did not listen or answer (verse 13). God said to them, "I will cast you out of My sight." Thus God said, "Do not pray for this people." **They were continuing in sin, leading to their own destruction.***

Another translation (RSV) calls "sin unto death" ... "mortal" sin.

Mortal sin unto death....Without going through a long list of possibilities....we are going to make it simple:

- **Mortal sin unto death....is one that produces unforgiveness on the human side.** *God is willing to forgive....but cannot accept anyone who has not and will not accept the idea that his/her sin must be forgiven. Since sin cannot be part of God's kingdom, anyone who has not been covered in the blood of Jesus cannot enter into heaven. One must be willing to accept the responsibility for knowing that there is no way out of this world and into God's kingdom than to come as a little child and say.... "Father, forgive me....I have sinned."*
- **Denial of one's faith....mortal sin to death, or sin of apostasy:** *It is actually choosing not to listen to the Holy Spirit....and denying that the Holy Spirit is convicting of sin (shaking one's hand at God...and, in his/her heart denying the power of the cross).*
- **The mortal sin is the state of those who have listened to sin (Satan) and refused to listen to God so often that they love and regard sin as the most profitable thing in the world.** *(Selling their soul for profit....denying God of the pleasure of knowing His creation). A SIN IN WHICH THE PERSON ENJOYS AND FINDS GREAT PLEASURE IN RECOMMITTING OVER AND OVER!*

There are sins that people can commit which God takes seriously enough so as to end their lives.

An example of this is of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-10 who lied to the Holy Spirit. God judged them for this and both were killed.

Another sin that is associated with death is found in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 where it is reported that a man was having sexual relations with his father's wife.

Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is another sin certainly worthy of death. *God gives those who commit the sin over to the depravity of their hearts and minds and they are beyond a point of no return. Some believe that blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is a sin that leads to death. At the very least, it ensures damnation.*

Therefore, it is possible for a brother to commit a sin unto death!

<p>Probably....what John was referring to is what he is suggesting in this letter....that is...the most deadly sin of all sins was to deny that Jesus really came in the flesh (Refusing to believe in the incarnation)....the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord.</p>

This possibility should sober every Christian, causing us to keep ourselves, abiding in Christ, growing in Him, testing the spirits and keeping God's commandments.

1 John 5:18-20, “We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the One who was born of God keeps them safe, and the evil one cannot harm them. ¹⁹ We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. ²⁰ We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true by being in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.”

Close of letter....The Threefold Christian Certainty:

1. Christians are set free from the power of sin...

This does not mean that Christians never sin; but it does mean that they are not the helpless slaves of sin.

“A child of God may sin, but his normal condition is resistance to evil.”

2. Christians are on the side of God against the world.

The source of our being is God, but the world lies in the power of the evil one.

The choices still confront us...whether we will stand with God or with the forces which are against God.

Really.....you know what is right if you are a child of God. The things that are important to God are obvious....and it is obvious as to what and where we stand.

3. Christians are conscious that they have entered into that reality which is God.

The questions are answered in our mind when we “set our mind on things of God....and we are not conformed to the world but are transformed by renewing of our mind....”

This proves to the world...and to us...that we are HIS!

The time of guessing who we are is gone....and the time of knowing whose we are has come!

Last verse....1 John 5:21, “My dear children, guard yourselves from idols.”

Why tack this on to the end of his letter?

It is important....because idols were a part of the heritage of those in whom he was writing.

Temple of Diana....Center of immoral rites.

○ *People who had sexual habits worse than animals.*

○ *The priests were pagans...and even performed immoral acts in the temple.*

“The worst of the worst” one philosopher noted.

John noted that anything in this life which is worshipped instead of God and allowed to take the place of God.....is an idol.

The Christian must keep themselves from the infections of all false faiths....

There are many things the Lord hates! The one thing that He will not tolerate under any circumstance is the worship of false gods.

JEHOVAH GOD is the ONE and ONLY!