



The Epistle of 1 John

“THE SIN UNTO DEATH”

1 John 5:16-17

Theme: God will follow through with the discipline of His children.

I. The Propriety of Intercession – *5:16a*

A. INDIFFERENCE IS UNCONSCIONABLE

1. Perhaps *“If anyone sees his brother committing a sin . . .”* - an indication of the responsibility that belongs to each person - a conditional statement assuming that everyone will have the opportunity.
2. It is the expectation that everyone who is born of God, loves the brethren - cp. *1 John 4:21*
3. Hence, you cannot look on and see your brother sinning with indifference or amusement or contempt.
4. Fulfilling the law of Christ necessitates your being concerned about your brother -- so much so that you will seek to see him restored - cp. *Galatians 6:1ff.*

B. INTERCESSION IS THE OPPORTUNITY

1. However, what does one do? Clearly prayer is the most crucial place one must turn – *“. . . he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death.”*
2. There are times when we cannot make a difference in someone’s life, they remain committed to their sin, however, we can turn to the Father who can open your brother’s ear and turn his heart.
3. Being involved in the process of appealing to a wayward brother, and invoking the hand of God in their life can result in God turning the brother away from their error to reconciliation - cp. *Matthew 18:15; 2 Timothy 2:24-26*

The Epistle of 1 John

4. However, as the wayward Christian continues to stray away from God, God promises that He will discipline Him because of His great love - cp. **Hebrews 12:5-11**
5. However, God's dealing with the errant Christian will generally fall short of the ultimate act of discipline - which is the physical death of the disobedient one.
Which brings us to:

II. **The Peril of Obstnacy** – ***5:16b***

A. THE EXTENT OF THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD

1. Here Here we are told that ***“there is a sin leading to death”*** – a clear statement that the most severe degree of discipline by God is the death of His child.
2. Again, recognize that the context teachings that John is addressing a situation involving a ***“brother committing a sin”*** and therefore this cannot be a reference to damnation.
3. Repeatedly in Scripture, we are shown the fact that God does use death as an extreme form of discipline of His children:
 - a. **1 Corinthians 11:30** – those who insisted on celebrating the Lord's Table unworthily.
 - b. **Acts 5:1-11** – those who were lying to the Holy Spirit
 - c. **James 5:19-2** - those who are not turned from the error of their way.
4. However, normally God does not immediately use the extreme application of death in disciplining His children, it can often be the outcome when a brother refuses to repent of their sin.
5. So, when do we know when it is no longer the believer's responsibility to pray for an erring brother as John teaches us here: ***“I do not say that he should make request for this?”***

B. THE EXECUTION OF THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD

1. When a brother or sister in the Lord falls, it is the responsibility of other believers to come alongside him or her for the purpose of “winning” them back, or seeing them reconciled to God.
2. However, if they refuse to listen to you, *Matthew 18:16* teaches that you don’t walk away hurt, but your return with “one or two more” and once again lovingly confront them.
 - a) If they refuse to hear them, “tell it to the church” – v. 17
 - b) If they refuse to listen “even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” – v. 17
3. This response is clarified for us in *1 Corinthians 5:1-5* where the errant brother is “delivered over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”
4. After this long process has occurred and the errant brother has refused to repent, then we are to release that one to the savagery of Satan to destroy them physically.
5. I believe that this is what is referred to committing a sin unto death – that the believer has refused to listen to compassionate brethren, then a small group, and finally the church which then delivers them over to Satan to be used by God to bring harsh chastisement.
6. Once the church delivers them over, they are not to pray that God will spare them any measure necessary to restore them to fellowship.

III. The Prompting of Prayer – 5:17

A. THE OBSTACLE TO RECONCILIATION TO GOD

1. *“All unrighteousness is sin”* – what stands between a sinner and fellowship with God is their sin.

The Epistle of 1 John

2. This is what is cared for in redemption and maintained through confession – cp. **1 John 1:9**

B. THE OPPORTUNITY FOR RECONCILIATION TO GOD

1. However, ***“there is a sin not leading to death”*** – that is, God does not immediately turn to the most severe consequences of our sin to discipline us toward restoration.
2. It is only when the believer has rejected the efforts of the church and the church has had to deliver them over to Satan that Christians are no longer supposed to be praying for mercy.
3. Thus, until that point, we need to be praying diligently that God will reconcile them to Himself so that ***“the evil one does not touch him.”*** – cp. **v. 18**.