

Help for the praying Christian.

1 John 5: 14 – 21

14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

16 If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.

17 All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

18 We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

19 And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

1 John 5:14-15)

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Confidence in prayer.

This is the confidence that we have in Him: John has developed the idea of confidence in Him. In the previous verse, 1 John 5:13, he wrote to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know you have eternal life. Now, for those who know they have eternal life, John relates the idea of confidence in Him to prayer.

If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us: In this, we see the purpose of prayer and the secret of power in prayer. It is to ask; to ask anything; to ask anything according to His will; and once having so asked, to have the assurance that He hears us.

First, God would have us ask in prayer. Much prayer fails because it never asks for anything. God is a loving God, and a generous giver — He wants us to ask of Him.

Second, God would have us ask anything in prayer. Not to imply that anything we ask for will be granted, but anything in the sense that we can and should pray about everything. God cares about our whole life, and nothing is too small or too big to pray about. As Paul wrote in [Philippians 4:6](#): Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Next, God would have us ask according to His will. It is easy for us to only be concerned with our will before God, and to have a fatalistic view regarding His will (“He will accomplish His will with or without my prayers anyway, won’t He?”). **But God wants us to see and discern His will through His Word, and to pray His will into action.** When John wrote this, John may have had Jesus’ own words in mind, which he recorded in [John 15:7](#): 7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. When we abide in Jesus — living in Him, day by day — then our will becomes more and more aligned with His will, and we can ask what you desire, and more and more be asking according to His will. Then we see answered prayer.

If something is God’s will, why doesn’t He just do it, apart from our prayers? Why would He wait to accomplish His will until we pray???

Because God has appointed us to work with Him as 2 Corinthians 6:1 says: as workers together with Him. God wants us to work with Him, and that means bringing our will and agenda into alignment with His. He wants us to care about the things He cares about, and He wants us to care about them enough to pray passionately about them.

We know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him: When we ask according to God’s will, when we pray the promises of God, we have this confidence; and so pray with real and definite faith.

Prayer should be so much more than casting wishes to heaven. It is rooted in understanding God’s will and promises according to His Word, and praying those promises into action. For each prayer request, we should mentally or vocally ask, “What possible reason do I have to think that God will answer this prayer?” We should be able to answer that question from His Word.

The most powerful prayers in the Bible are always prayers which understand the will of God, and ask Him to perform it. We may be annoyed when one of our children says, “Daddy, this is what you promised, now please do it,” but God is delighted **when we pray**

His promises. It shows our will aligned with His, our dependence on Him, and that we take His Word seriously.

It is not necessarily wrong to ask for something that God has not promised; but we then realize that we are not coming to God on the basis of a specific promise, and we don't have the confidence to know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

Praying for a sinning brother.

1 John 5:16-17

16 If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.

17 All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin... he will ask: When we see a brother in sin, John tells us the first thing to do is to pray for that person. All too often, prayer is the last thing we do, or the smallest thing we do in regard to our brother having a difficult time.

And He will give him life: God promised to bless the prayer made on behalf of a brother in sin. Perhaps such prayers have special power before God because they are prayers in fulfillment of the command to love the brethren. Surely, we love each other best when we pray for each other.

There is sin leading to death: Because John wrote in context of a brother, it is wrong to see him meaning a sin leading to spiritual death; he probably meant a sin leading to the physical death of the believer.

This is a difficult concept, but we have an example of it in **1 Corinthians 11:27-30**,

27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

Where Paul says that among the Christians in Corinth, because of their disgraceful conduct at the Lord's Supper, some had died (many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep). This death came not as a condemning judgment, but as a corrective judgment

(But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world [1 Corinthians 11:32]).

Apparently, a believer can sin to the point where God believes it is just best to bring them home, probably because they have in some way compromised their testimony so significantly that they should just come on home to God.

However, it is certainly presumptuous to think this about every case of an untimely death of a believer, or to use it as an enticement to suicide for the guilt-ridden Christian. Our lives are in God's hands, and if He sees fit to bring one of His children home, that is fine.

Some believe that brother is used here in a very loose sense, and what John means by the sin leading to death is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, which is the willful, settled rejection of Jesus Christ. But this would be a curious use of the term brother, especially according to how John has already used brother in his own letter.

I do not say that he should pray about that: Apparently, when a Christian is being corrected in regard to a sin leading to death, there is no point in praying for his recovery or restoration — the situation is in God's hands alone.

There is sin not leading to death: John takes pains to recognize that not every sin leads to death in the manner he speaks of, though all unrighteousness is sin.

Knowing who we are and who our enemies are.

1 John 5:18-19

18 We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

19 And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

Whoever is born of God does not sin: In the battle against sin, it is all-essential that we keep our minds set on who we are in Jesus Christ. If we are born of Him, we then have the resources to be free from habitual sin.

John is repeating his idea from 1 John 3:6: **Whoever abides in Him does not sin. The grammar in the original language makes it plain John is speaking of a settled, continued lifestyle of sin. John is not teaching here the possibility of sinless perfection. As Stott says, "The present tense in the Greek verb implied habit, continuity, unbroken sequence."**

He who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him: If we are born of Him we then have a protection against the wicked one, a unique protection that does not belong to the one who is not born of Him. Knowing this gives us godly confidence in spiritual warfare.

In verse 18, himself is more accurately him. What John probably means here is that He who has been born of God (that is, Jesus Christ) keeps him (that is, the believer). John means that we are kept by Jesus and protected from Satan by Him.

Does not touch him: The word touch here has the idea of to attach one's self to. John clearly says that the wicked one — Satan, or, by implication one of His demons — cannot attach himself to the one who is born of Him.

What Greek scholars say about this word touch: The word is “stronger than toucheth; rather graspeth, layeth hold of” (Smith, in Expositor’s). “It means to lay hold of or to grasp rather than a mere superficial touch.” (Robertson)

The only other place in his writings where John uses this particular verb for touch is in John 20:17, where He literally tells Mary to stop clinging to Me. Because we are born of Him, Satan cannot attach himself to us, or cling to us, in the sense he can in the life of someone who is not born of Him.

We know that we are of God: If we are born of Him, we are set off from the world — we are no longer under the sway of the wicked one, though the whole world still is. Knowing this means we can be free to be what we are in Jesus and separate ourselves from the world system in rebellion against Him.

Abide in Jesus and avoid idols.

1 John 5:20-21

20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

That we may know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ: In the conclusion of this letter, John returned to his major theme: **fellowship with Jesus**

Christ. We must know Him, and the word John uses for know (ginosko) speaks of knowledge by experience. That is how Jesus wants us to know Him.

Has given us an understanding: The work of Jesus in us gives us an understanding, and the ability to know Him, and to be in Him — the abiding life of fellowship that John invited us to back in 1 John 1:3.

Significantly, this understanding must be given. We cannot attain it on our own. If God did not reveal Himself to us, we would never find Him. We know Him, and can know Him, because He has revealed Himself to us.

More than any other way, God has revealed Himself to us by Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus is the key and the focus of it all. We see the personality and character of God by looking at Jesus.

Him who is true also reminds us of a theme John has had through the letter: the importance of true belief, of trusting in **the true Jesus, not a made-up Jesus**. The Jesus of the Bible is Him who is true, who is His Son Jesus Christ.

This is the true God and eternal life: Here John tells us who Jesus is. He was a man (as John declared in 1 John 1:1, 4:2, and 5:6), but He was not only a man. He was totally man and the true God and eternal life. John does not, **and we can not**, promote the humanity of Jesus over His deity, or His deity over His humanity. He is both: fully God and fully man.

Keep yourselves from idols: This may seem like a strange way to end John's letter, but it fits in with the theme of a real, living relationship with God. **The enemy to fellowship with God is idolatry: embracing a false god, or a false idea of the true God.** John rightly closes with this warning, after having spent much of the book warning us against the dangers of the false Jesus many were teaching in his day (1 John 3:18-23; 4:1-3; 5:6-9).

We can only have a real relationship with the God who is really there! Idolatry, whether obvious (praying to a statue) or subtle (living for your career or someone other than God) will always choke out a real relationship with God, and damage our relationships with our brothers and sisters in Jesus. No wonder John ends with keep yourselves from idols; this is how we protect our relationship with God.

Little Children

This is a title of deep affection.

This is a title that indicates regeneration and family relation.

This is a title that indicates humility.

This is a title that indicates teachableness.

This is a title that implies faith.

This is a title that implies weakness.