

**1 John 5:14-17 (NKJV) 14 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, 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 the petitions that we have asked of Him.**

**16 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.**

**17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not *leading* to death.**

Remember that we talked about prayer last week. We asked the question, why pray? And the answer was to participate in what God is doing. The God who determines the ends also determines the means.

We also talked about praying with certainty.

Now, for us to pray with certainty there are several conditions.

1. We must know that we are IN CHRIST.
2. We must ask according to God's Will

We covered these two last week

3. We must believe that Christ hears us in a special preferential way
4. We know God will give us what we ask

So this morning we begin with point 3.

We must believe that Christ hears us in a special **preferential** way

Now we must keep in mind that this is speaking of those who are in Christ and know it. We are **praying** and **recognizing that we are saved** because we believe in what Christ did for us. In **this** context we are praying for that which **is God's will**. Sometimes we get that right. But we live with the understanding that sometimes we get it wrong. There are many times that we **think** we know God's will for sure. We **think** that God **must** want this thing. But we find out later that this is **not** what God wanted. So this is not asking according to our best guess about God's will. That may or may not be answered. But when we pray for that which is **IN God's will**, that will always happen.

Now we come to

**15 And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.**

Now, what does it mean that God hears us? Is God deaf to somethings and only hears other things? We know that such a thing is impossible. For God to know **everything** He must, in some sense, **hear** everything. It is the same

type of dilemma we speak of when we say that God does not remember our sins. In one sense that is impossible. But in another sense it is perfectly true. We must remember to ask, which **sense** are we talking about?

Let's look at God's hearing was commonly referred to. This was quoted by the guy that was healed by Jesus and then was forced to report to the Pharisees.

**John 9:31-34 (NKJV)**

**31 Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him.**

**32 Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind.**

**33 If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing."**

**34 They answered and said to him, "You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" And they cast him out.**

It is interesting that the Pharisees did not try to correct this man's view of God's hearing. What he said made such good sense that the only option they had was to resort to name calling.

God does **not hear sinners**. (That is unless they are calling out to God in repentance)

God **does** hear the one who does His will.

Look what David had to say.

**Psalm 66:18, 19 (NKJV)**

**18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear.**

**19 But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer.**

Scripture is very consistent. There is only one thing to do when we have knowingly sinned against God. All other efforts will be fruitless. We should stop right there and **confess** our sins. Fellowship will be hindered until then. He promises to forgive our sins right there and **restore** fellowship. That is what we must do. Increasing our service to Him in other areas, but reserving this spot for ourselves will not work. **Refusing to think about it** is not an option. **Pretending** will not accomplish anything.

There is little as dangerous as a believer reserving a place in their lives to continue sinning. If there is anything in your life that you keep in your life primarily to allow you to sin, you might as well stop praying until you remove it from your life. Maybe it is a relationship, or an app, or a subscription, or a prescription, or an anything. If its primary purpose is for you to sin, don't bother praying. God will not hear you. He promises that. Repent and remove that thing from your life.

Now it is much more difficult if that thing **cannot** be removed from your life. But if it cannot, bring it out into the light in such a way that someone will know if you are sinning. Do whatever you must do so that you do not **live in the state** where you can be certain God isn't listening to you, in the sense that He is in fellowship in a way that He wants to answer your requests.

This is no small thing.

Now if I were a wife and I were married to a Christian man, this next verse would be very precious to me. It is better than any action that I could resort to for changing this man's behavior.

**1 Peter 3:7 (NKJV)**

**7 Husbands, likewise, dwell with *them* (your wives) with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as *being* heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.**

Wives, this means **God has your back**. There is nothing theoretical here.

This is a reality. If a Christian man wants God to hear His prayers, if He wants God to answer those things He is crying out to God about, that man must honor you. Now this idea of honoring you might not fit just any definition you **apply to it**. But if God determines that your husband is not treating you right, God will enforce His own form of trade embargoes against his country.

And men, are you praying for something that seems obviously to be God's will, but God is not moving? Look closely at how you are treating your wife. Are you treating her how **you would want to be treated** by your **employer**?

It is not terribly complicated.

Anyway, we see from all of this that God has selective hearing. He hears with favor and with a willingness to give His child good gifts when His child is walking in an obedient relationship with Him. But God does not listen that way when we are choosing to sin.

Are your prayers being **answered**? That is a good evidence that you are walking in a **right relationship** with Christ. Are your prayers for even things that seem to be right up God's alley **not** being answered? It might be time to examine your life. You may have hidden sin.

But if we are walking obediently, with no known hidden sin, we can pray boldly. And we can know that absolutely God hears us in the sense of a father being attentive to the child he loves.

**15 And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask,**

Now at this point we need to ask, what kind of God are we serving?

**Matthew 7:7-12 (NKJV)**

**7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.**

**8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.**

**9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?**

**10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?**

**11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!**

**12 Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.**

You see, this is the kind of God we have.

Do you believe this? Do you believe that God is quicker to give good things to His children than **you are** to give good things to YOUR children?

I get a kick out of giving stuff to my kids that they really want. I am not the greatest at figuring out **what that is**. But I do not mind spending money on those things. Because it **pleases me** to **please them**. God is somewhat like that. If we do not believe that, we should do business with this concept. God **likes** to give us the stuff that will **ultimately** make us happy. Sometimes they are things we want **right now**. Sometimes they are gifts that we **learn**, over time, **to appreciate**. But He never gives us stuff to purposely disappoint us or disillusion us. He doesn't get us wanting a piece of bread and He gives us a stone and laughs while we open the gift. That is not like God. He is better than us.

It is always **God's desire**, and His **ability**, to give us good gifts. But like a parent, He must allow us to face our share of hardships so we can be the kind of people who can **appreciate** His gifts.

The one thing you can always know for sure about God is that **He is better than you are**. So if you think you would give good gifts to your kids, whatever that is, God is **better** than that.

So if we are living in fellowship with God, **without** known sin on our part **breaking** that fellowship, we know that **God hears us**. And He hears in a mindset of **wanting to give good things**.

Then we look at the rest of the verse.

**15 And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.**

Now this is interesting. This does not say we know we **will get** what we asked for. It says we know we already have what we asked for.

Now there are many that say, yes that is the secret. You must **believe enough** so that you will have it. You must name the thing and claim it in Jesus name.

You need to stamp Jesus's name as a magical charm on this request and if you drum up enough belief that will please God and He is then bound to give it to you.

They might quote these verses.

**Mark 11:22-24 (NKJV)**

**22 So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God.**

**23 For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.**

**24 Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive *them*, and you will have *them*.**

If this were the only passage speaking about prayer in scripture, we might find ourselves confused. But we do not find that **drumming up some level of belief** is the way to get stuff with God. The primary importance is not on the **level** of our belief but the **accuracy** of that which we strongly believe. Our **belief** does not somehow change anything about what God is planning to do. But when our **belief** aligns with **what God plans to do** God will do the thing and we will testify to the fact that God did the thing.

Let's look at Romans 8:26,27

**Romans 8:26-27 (NKJV)**

**26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.**

**27 Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*.**

This is a wonderful truth.

We see first that the people of God are helped.

What do we not know? We don't know **exactly** how to pray.

Isn't that all of our experiences? Someone gets sick. Is God going to heal him?

Someone faces bankruptcy. Will God rescue him? A person turns from God.

Will God turn them around? We really don't know God's will in all things.

So what is the comfort?

Well first, we have a **prayer interpreter**. The Holy Spirit has already dropped those things that are against God's will when He approaches the Father. We do not need to be afraid that God will mistakenly grant a foolish or spurious request. That will not happen.

But the Holy Spirit is putting our prayers, the prayers of **sincere followers** of Christ who **are not regarding sin in their hearts**, into most **effective requests**. The Holy Spirit is interpreting our prayers into God's will. But not only is the Spirit urging. But is not the Holy Spirit always **leading us into truth**. Does He not prompt us in directions? Does He not change our minds? Often the Holy Spirit lets us know what it is **He** is praying for and **leads us** in that direction. This kind of divine guidance is not unknown in scripture. God guided Paul on where to minister and where not to minister. It gave Peter insight into what Ananias and Sapphira were really trying to pull off. Sometimes God gives people insight into someone who will be healed or someone who will be saved, and a person can pray for that thing knowing it is as good as accomplished.

I think that might be the exception, rather than the rule when we pray. But maybe that is the exception because we are not as absorbed with knowing and doing the will of God as we should be. I do not know.

But I do know there are lots of things that are part of God's **revealed** will. We can pray many of the prayers in the Old and New Testament and put our names to them. Many, we can be certain, are God's will for our lives and that God will answer them if we will ask them.

Do you want to be **more loving**? Pray for that. God will answer it.

Do you want to be **more holy**? Pray for that. God will answer it.

Do you want to be more honest, more humble, more submissive to God's will, more knowledgeable of God's will, we can pray all these things knowing that **God will answer them**. These do not require an extraordinary guidance of God. They simply require a belief in **God's clearly revealed will**.

Do you want the world to change to **submit** to God's principles. We cannot expect that. We are told the world's system is **opposed** to God's rule.

There are lots of things that seem good that we cannot be assured that our prayers would be answered for those things. I would have thought that the instant response by God to stop the Muslim oppression of believers would have been a wonderful thing. But, by God allowing that hideous oppression to continue, He has opened the eyes of many Muslims to the darkness of their religion. So the **good** that God had in mind was **better** than the **good** that I could imagine God would want to do. Muslims are coming to Christ at a much greater rate than they ever would have before the Muslims committed the awful atrocities that they did.

So we can expect that God will **do what we ask** when we know that **what we ask** is in His will.

Let's look at this again. In order for us to be confident in prayer-

1. We must know that we are IN CHRIST.
2. We must ask according to God's Will
3. We must believe that Christ hears us in a special preferential way
4. We know God will give us what we ask

Now let's look at the last two verses.

**16 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.**

**17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not *leading* to death.**

Now, how many of us are surprised that John would jump from us praying **for ourselves** to immediately praying for **fellow believers**? If we are surprised, we don't know our brother John very well. He cannot speak of one of the signs of a believer for long without mentioning the next one.

He is talking about praying **expectantly**. But he cannot remove from his mind **our brothers**. If we are praying expectantly, naturally we will be praying for our brothers and sisters.

Any Christianity that is not presented in the backdrop of Christian community is not biblical Christianity. Our walk is not primarily about **me and Jesus**. It is about me and Jesus and Jesus's family. I am not free to disassociate and re-associate myself from churches, while looking for that assembly that best meets my needs. Church is all about God's family. Would we jump from family to family until we find a dad to our liking? That is absurd. I am not saying that there is never a time to switch churches. But I do believe that the only time to do that is when there is some very compelling reason, like heresy. There are also other reasons, but there aren't many.

So we are told here how to respond to the needs around us. Our text says:

**If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death,**  
Now another million dollar question. What is the sin which does **not lead to death**?

It is clear that John expected the people who read his letter to understand what sin he was talking about. We aren't given a whole lot to go on. But we know that one kind of sin **should be** prayed about. The other kind **should not**. And different results were expected.

Our best bet to get a proper understanding is to look at **the context** the letter is written in. John is fighting gnostic heresy. Some people were clinging to this heresy. Others were being warned of it.

Some of this church were probably leaving the one true faith for this heresy. Others were coming from inside and outside to push this false doctrine. What sin is really **unforgivable**? Well Jesus said this:

**Mark 3:28-30 (NKJV)**

**28 "Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter;**

**29 but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation"--**

**30 because they said, "He has an unclean spirit."**

There has been a lot said about this unforgivable sin, but it appears to me to be **unforgivable** because it is the rejection of the only power that could possibly cause a person to repent. If a person condemns the work of God on one's own heart and life as being evil, he has made it impossible to get right with God. It would be like making a decision to never take the only remedy to a terminal illness you have. That is impossible to recover from.

Now in John's letter, he is most likely talking about those who had heard the gospel, who maybe had made a decision, at some point, to **follow** Christ, but they determined that they **preferred** the **false doctrine**. Normally people who make those kinds of stand are exceedingly arrogant and self satisfied. They see themselves as being on the moral high ground. And since they have rejected what was **clearly true** for what is **clearly false**, there is no appeal left. They are essentially committing the unpardonable sin.

The unpardonable sin is not unpardonable because it is so evil. It is unpardonable because it cuts off **any avenue of pardon**. It rejects the only path to being **forgiven**.

I think it is likely John is saying, you do not need to waste your time praying for the false teachers. It will have no effect. That sin is bound to lead to their eternal death. Do not commit your life to that pursuit.

But now believers, on the other hand,.... They will sin all kinds of sins. They will do despicable things. But the huge difference is that they are not **committed** to standing **against** Christ. The sin they commit is hypocritical to who they really are. It is incongruent. If a person is in Christ and they are committing a known visible sin, they should be prayed for. We are told elsewhere they should be **more than prayed for**. They should also be approached and challenged as well. All stops should be pulled out in our attempts to reconcile them. But this passage only mentions the **prayer work** that should be done.

Let's look at the text one more time.



**16 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.**

**17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not *leading* to death.**

Now we also have to keep in mind that the false teaching at this church John is ministering to teaches that what we do with our bodies does not matter. It is only our spirit that is important. John will have none of this nonsense.

Anything we do that is unrighteous, anything that goes against God's revealed standard of righteousness is **sin**. Now all sin, apart from Christ leads to death. But among believers the only sin that would lead to spiritual death would be a sin revealing that the person **is not a believer at all**.

But if a person is a believer, we are to be engaged in their turning back to Christ. And our prayers and actions should all be a congruent effort to reconcile that person to Christ. If they **are** a believer they **will be reconciled**. If they are actively **rejecting** Christ, they are not worthy of praying for. For nothing can be done for that person in that state.

I hope these last two Sundays have been encouraging our prayers. I hope we can see that prayers is one of the means that God uses to allow us to participate in what He is doing. I hope we have been struck with what a **meaningful honor** it is that He **calls** us into this process. He wants to use **you** to accomplish things for eternity. This isn't just some religious ideal. This is **rock solid** truth in our day to day lives. If we waste our lives in stuff that does not matter, that is only done by **ignoring** God's invitations to be involved in His Kingdom building. And we tend to only **feel as valuable** as that which we are **committed to**. What is it that God is **inviting you to** that you are resisting? We will all be happier when we just say Yes to God's invitations.