**Grace Group Guide**

**1 John 5: 14-17**

 **BEHOLD, DEAR CHILDREN!** We are drawing near the end of our study of 1 John, thus the heading in my Bible “Concluding Remarks”. These verses have to do with prayer – confidence in approaching God and praying for a brother who commits a sin. Before we look closer at these verses, let’s consider the prayer life of “you who believe in the name of the Son of God” (vs 13). Tom Wontrop in his book “Dear Christian” says, *“Many sermons have gone forth on the subject of prayer. So much so, that prayer is perhaps one of the most written about, read about, talked about subjects in God’s Word. And yet, if you ask the average Christian if they are 100% satisfied with their prayer life, of if they know of anyone who is 100 satisfied with their prayer life, they will generally respond in the negative. Why is that?”* He goes on to say, *“Maybe the problem is not with our prayer lives as much as it is with what we have believed about prayer. Maybe we have been embracing man-made views on prayer that are not in tune with God’s Word. I have been taught a wonderful truth about prayer that has revolutionized my entire prayer life! At its heart is the conclusion that God includes a lot more as prayer than His people generally do. In other words, it seems God’s people have placed limits on prayer that God has never intended, and dear believer, it may surprise you to learn as it did me, that you may be praying a lot more than you recognize.”*

 Prayer is the lifeblood of a Christian’s walk with God. Prayer connects us to God, prayer is an active way to love and connect with others, and prayer makes room in the pray-er’s heart for God’s correcting voice. *Warren Wiersbe says, “What breathing is to a physical man, prayer is to a spiritual man”.*

 **Look at and discuss these verses on prayer: Psalm 5:3, Psalm 6:9, Psalm 54:2, Psalm 66:20, Psalm 90:1, Psalm 102:1, Psalm 145:18, Proverbs 15:8, Daniel 9:3, Jonah 2:7, Matthew 5:44, Matthew 17:20, Matthew 26:41, Mark 11:24, Luke 11:2-4, John 17:15, 20, Acts 1:14, Acts 2:42, Romans 8:26-27, Romans 12:12, Ephesians 1:16, Colossians 1:9, Philippians 4:6, 1 Timothy 2:1, James 5:16, Hebrews 11:1, 6, 1 Peter 3:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 25.**

**1 John 5:14-15 This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.**

 (Warren Wiersbe’s Bible Commentary) Christians have confidence in prayer, just as they have confidence as they await the judgment (1 John 2:28; 4:17). *As* we have seen, the word confidence means "freedom of speech." We can come to the Father freely and tell Him our needs. Of course, there are conditions we must meet.

 First, we must have a heart that does not condemn us (1 John 3:21-22). Unconfessed sin is a serious obstacle to answered prayer (Ps. 66:18). It is worth noting that differences between a Christian husband and his wife can hinder their prayers (1 Peter 3: 1-7). If there is anything between us and any other Christian, we must settle it (Matt. 5:23-25). And unless a believer is abiding in Christ, in love and obedience, his prayers will not be answered (John 15:7).

 Second, we must pray in God's will. "Thy will be done" (Matt. 6: 1 0). "Prayer is a mighty instrument, not for getting man's will done in heaven, but for getting God's will done on earth," wrote Robert Law. George Mueller, who fed thousands of orphans with food provided in answer to prayer, said, "Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance. It is laying hold of God's willingness. "

There are times when we can only pray, "Not my will but thine be done," because we simply do not know God's will in a matter. But most of the time we can determine God's will by reading the Word, listening to the Spirit (Rom. 8:26-27), and discerning the circumstances around us. Our very faith to ask God for something is often proof that He wants to give it (Heb. 11:1).

 There are many promises in the Bible that we can claim in prayer. God has promised to supply our needs (Phil. 4: 19)-not our greeds! If we are obeying His will and really need something, He will supply it in His way and in His time.

 "But if it is God's will for me to have a thing, then why should I pray about it?" Because prayer is the way God wants His children to get what they need. God not only ordains the end, but He also ordains the means to the end - prayer. And the more you think about it, the more wonderful this arrangement becomes. Prayer is really the thermometer of the spiritual life. God has ordained that I maintain a close walk with Him if I expect Him to meet my needs.

 John did not write, "we shall have the requests," but, "we know that we have the requests" (1 John 5: 15). The verb is present tense. We may not see the answer to a prayer immediately, but we have inner confidence that God has answered. This confidence, or faith, is the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). It is God witnessing to us the He has heard and answered.

The most important thing about prayer is the will of God. We must take time to ascertain what God’s will is in a matter, especially searching in the Bible for promises or principles that apply to our situation. Once we know the will of God, we can pray with confidence and then wait for Him to reveal the answer.

**To whom is this promise made? How must we pray to know God hears our prayers? How can we know the will of God?**

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

 "We know that no one who is born of God sins" (1 John 5:18 NASB). "No one who is born of God practices sin" (1 John 3:9 NASB). **Occasional sins are not here in view, but habitual sins, the practice of sin.** Because a believer has a new nature ("God's seed," 1 John 3:9), he has new desires and appetites and is not interested in sin.

 A Christian faces three enemies, all of which want to lead him into sin: **the world, the flesh, and the devil**. The world "lies in the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19 NASB), Satan-the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:3-4, literal translation) and the prince of this world (John 14:30). He is the spirit who works in the children of disobedience (Eph. 2:2).

 Satan has many devices for leading a believer into sin. He tells lies, as he did to Eve (Gen. 3; 2 Cor. 11: 1-3), and when men believe his lies they turn away from and disobey God's truth. Or, Satan may inflict physical suffering, as he did with Job and Paul (2 Cor. 12:7-9). In David's case, Satan used pride as his weapon and urged David to number the people and in this way defy God (1 Chron. 21). Satan is like a serpent who deceives (Rev. 12:9) and a lion who devours (1 Peter 5:8-9). He is a formidable enemy.

 Then there is the problem of the flesh, the old nature with which we were born and that is still with us. True, we have a new nature (the divine seed, 1 John 3:9) within us, but we do not always yield to our new nature.

 The world is our third enemy (1 John 2:15, 17). It is easy for us to yield to the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life! The atmosphere around us makes it hard for us to keep our minds pure and our hearts true to God.

 **Then how does a believer keep from sinning?**

 First John 5: 18 gives the answer: Jesus Christ keeps the believer so that the enemy cannot get his hands on him. "He [Christl who was born of God keeps him [the believer]' and the evil one does not touch him" (NASB). The Authorized Version here gives the impression that a believer keeps himself from sin, but this is not what the verse says. Of course, it is true that a Christian must keep himself in the love of God (Jude 21), but it is not true that a Christian must depend on himself to overcome Satan.

When a believer sins, he can confess his sin and be forgiven (1 John 1:9). But a believer dare not play with sin, because sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4, where "transgression of the law" means "lawlessness"). A person who practices sin proves that he belongs to Satan (1 John 3:7-10). Furthermore, God warns that sin can lead to physical death!

 "All unrighteousness is sin," but some sin is worse than other sin. All sin is hateful to God, and should be hateful to a believer; but some sin is punished with death. John told us (1 John 5:16-17) about the case of a brother (a believer) whose life was taken because of sin.

 The Bible mentions people who died because of their sin. Nadab and Abihu, the two sons of Aaron the priest, died because they deliberately disobeyed God (Lev. 10:1-7). Korah and his clan opposed God and died (Num. 16). Achan was stoned because he disobeyed Joshua's orders from God at Jericho (Josh. 6-7). A man named Uzzah touched the ark and God killed him (2 Sam. 6).

 "But those are Old Testament examples!" someone may argue. "John was writing to New Testament believers who live under grace!"

 To whom much is given, much shall be required. A believer today has a far greater responsibility to obey God than did the Old Testament saints. We have a complete Bible, we have the full revelation of God's grace, and we have the Holy Spirit living within us to help us obey God. But there are cases in the New Testament of believers who lost their lives because they disobeyed God.

Ananias and Sapphira lied to God about their offering, and they both died (Acts 5: 1-11). Some believers at Corinth died because of the way they had acted at the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:30). And 1 Corinthians 5: 1-5 suggests that a certain offender would have died had he not repented and confessed his sin (2 Cor. 2:6-8).

 If a believer does not judge, confess, and forsake sin, God must chasten him. This process is described in Hebrews 12: 1-13, which suggests that a person who does not subject himself to the Father will not live (Heb. 12:9). In other words, first God "spanks" his rebellious children, and if they do not yield to His will, He may remove them from the world lest their disobedience lead others astray and bring further disgrace to His name.

 "The sin unto death" is not some one specific sin. Rather, it is a kind of sin-it is the sort of sin that leads to death. With Nadab and Abihu, it was their presumption in taking the priest's office and entering the Holy of Holies. In the case of Achan it was covetousness. Ananias and Sapphira were guilty of hypocrisy and even of lying to the Holy Spirit.

 If a Christian sees a brother committing sin, he should pray for him (1 John 5: 16), asking that he confess his sin and return to fellowship with the Father. But if in his praying, he does not sense that he is asking in God's will (as instructed in 1 John 5:14-15), then he should not pray for the brother. "Therefore, pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me; for I will not hear thee" Ger. 7: 16).

 James 5:14-20 somewhat parallels 1 John 5:16-17. James described a believer who is sick, possibly because of his sin. He sends for the elders, who come to him and pray for him. The prayer of faith heals him, and if he has sinned his sins are forgiven. "The prayer of faith" is prayer in the will of God, as described in 1 John 5:14-15. It is "praying in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 20 NASB).

 Christians do not deliberately practice sin. They have the divine nature within; Jesus Christ guards them, and they do not want God's discipline.

**“Whenever the insistence is on the point that God answers prayer, we are off track. The meaning of prayer is that we get hold of God, not the answer.” Oswald Chambers, My Utmost for His Highest**

Pressin’ on, David