

# **“PRAYING FOR SINNERS”**

**I JOHN 5:16-17**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Pray for sinners! So, what do we mean by that?

The connection of vv. 16-17 with verses 14-15 is clear; John still speaks about the effective intercession of the believer according to the will of God. God hears the believer praying according to His will and thus grants the request made. Verse 16 focuses on the prayer of intercession on behalf of other believers who are guilty of committing a sin, and who have not yet made things right with God and the assembly. As long as such sin is not unto death, one may confidently intercede on behalf of the sinner and see him restored. Such intercession is definitely in the will of God.

John has just spoken about the assurance of eternal life for those who believe in the name of the Son of God. Such life is manifested in love, for God is love and we must love one another (4:8-12). But, prayer is one of the most practical ways in which we can manifest such love. Christians form a body—the “body of Christ.” Even when praying for oneself, we pray for part of that body; but we must not neglect the rest of the body. “The end of prayer is the perfection of the whole Christian body” (W. 191).

## **YOU MUST PRAY FOR YOUR SINNING BROTHER!**

- I. THE OBJECT OF PRAYER—Visible Sin (Sees”).
- II. THE PERSON PRAYING—“Anyone,” a believer in the body of Christ.
- III. THE PERSON SINNING—“Brother”—at least one professing to be a brother.
- IV. THE NATURE OF THE SIN
  - A. “Sinning a sin”
    1. A practice or habit.
    2. Serious as shown by use of both the verb and noun together.
  - B. “Not unto death”
    1. Death is not physical here—only use in I Jn. is of spiritual death.
    2. Spiritual death—final apostasy seems to be in view.
      - Compare the teaching of the entire book—those who had left the assembly because they were not “of them” (2:19).
      - The false teachers and “antichrists” John has spoken of.
- V. THE NATURE OF THE DUTY—“He shall ask” in prayer.
- VI. GOD WILL RESPOND.
  - A. He will give “life”—restoration of fullness of life, not eternal life which cannot be lost (5:13).

- B. Life given “to” or “for” him [either the sinning one or the interceder] and “to those who commit sin.”
  - i.e. sin “not unto death”
  
- VII. THERE IS A SIN UNTO DEATH.
  - A. Intercession not commanded for that sin.
    - Literally—“not concerning that do I say that he should ask/pray.”
  - B. Intercession not forbidden for that sin.
  
- VIII. DON’T TAKE SIN TOO LIGHTLY—“All unrighteousness is sin.”
  
- IX. DON’T BE DISHEARTENED—“There is a sin not unto death.”

## CONCLUSION

Determining what “the sin unto death” is has always stirred a livelier interest than a discussion of the main point of these verses made by the Apostle John: “The Christian prerogative of fearless and expectant prayer for a restorative gift of Life to them that sin not unto death” (Law, 142). If Christians are to be willing to lay down their lives for their brethren, are they not obligated to “pray for their brethren?”

There was a practice at Qumran that left little if any place for mercy for even the least violation of the Mosaic Law. When deliberate sin occurred, expulsion from the community was permanent; when inadvertent sin occurred, a two year probation period was mandatory for readmission. **This is not how believers are to operate!**

Believers must Pray for one another—especially when our brother sins!  
It is **your** responsibility!

## YOU MUST PRAY FOR YOUR SINNING BROTHER!

The prayer of faith is “all-prevailing” when in accord to God’s will, and surely “God is not willing that any should perish”; yet, God has so designed man’s will that He will not violate it nor force man to trust Him against his will. When man has ultimately apostatized and turned from truth, God permits him to do so and will not force him to be saved contrary to his will. It is not God’s will to save a man apart from the softened will and genuine faith imparted to one who responds to the wooing and drawing of the Holy Spirit. It is not that God is helpless in the matter; **He sovereignly chooses to operate in such a way**. Then, even the prayer of faith does not prevail to force a sinner to be saved who has ultimately turned from grace and sinned the sin unto death.

**Turn and be saved—before your “day of grace” is over!**