

The First Epistle of John

...so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ (1John 1:3)

1John 5:16-17

Review

Where is John writing from?

What heresy was he addressing?

What flavor of Gnosticism was John specifically dealing with?

What did the heretics teach?

How does John deal with this false teaching?

1John 1:6-10

Someone read vv5:6-10

Someone read vv5:11-17

Some commentators have concluded – from not very clear evidence – that the last 9 verses were added to John’s letter sometime after he wrote what came previously. These critics also make this argument about the 21st chapter of John’s Gospel.

Both Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria (mid-2nd Century) quote from the last 9 verses, and attribute their quotes to the Apostle John. Further, the style of the writing precisely matches the style of the previous chapters – it’s hard to believe that a later editor could so exactly match John’s style.

“Before him” = *pros auton* = means literally “toward Him” (ESV) or “approaching him” (NIV). Some commentators see **PROS** in this verse as shorthand for the idiomatic expression **PROSÔPON PROS PROSÔPON** (literally "face to face", RWP). Signifies intimacy with God in prayer.

Now you cannot read the New Testament without realizing that God delights in bold praying, and in bold people.

See Hebrews 4:14-16 and Hebrews 10:19 KJV.

This is what ought to characterize prayer. It should be bold, confident, certain.

Let’s look at what James says about prayer: James 4:3.

We want what *we* want, not what God wants.

Last time we discussed praying the scriptures and personalizing them.

What's another way we can tell when we are praying according to God's will?

See Romans 8:26-27

As these verses tell us, the Spirit of God helps us in our weakness by prompting our desires for more of the real life that satisfies, not only ourselves, but others as well. The Spirit is our Helper that we might pray according to his will..

Within the will of God there are tremendous things that he has provided for his own. The will of God includes all that we need. All that we really want is available to us and to our loved ones and friends within the will of God. There is nothing we need to pray for outside of it. Outside are only things that harm, injure and destroy us.

Prayer is designed only to obtain that which is within the will of God.

Thus, John says, that if you know that what you are asking for is within the will of God, if you have found a promise of God in Scripture, or, in seeking the mind of God there has come a deep and settled conviction in your heart from the Spirit of God that something is the will of God, then, knowing that this is the will of God you ask for it, you know that he hears. God always hears every prayer that is voiced within the boundaries of his will. This is the first certainty that forms the basis of prayer -- we know we are heard.

What does Jesus say in GJohn 11:42?

Because everything He did lay within the boundaries of the will of God.

That brings us then to the second certainty of prayer, the certainty of having: "If we know that he hears us," John says, "then we know that we have obtained the request that we made of him." Think of that! If we know it is according to his will, we know it is heard, and if we know it is heard, we know that we have it. God has already granted the request. In other words, God never says "No," except to that which lies outside his will.

What does Paul say in 2 Corinthians 1:20?

There are no negatives, it is all "yea and Amen." Isn't that wonderful? Do you dare to believe that?

Let's look at Psalms 84:11. No good thing!

Let's look at what Jesus says in Luke 11:10-13

You would not do that, and God is much better than you. If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father respond to your needs in prayer? That is the true basis of prayer.

John concludes with this because prayer is the simplest expression of our life in Jesus Christ manifest in a practical way. We are to be constantly praying, constantly making requests of God on this basis of His will, knowing that he hears us and grants it, and all we need say is, "Thank you, Lord."

1 Thess 5:18: "giving thanks in all things, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

1Jn 5:16 If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, ⁽²⁸⁾ he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. ⁽²⁹⁾ There is a sin leading to death; ⁽³⁰⁾ I do not say that he should make request for this.

John now moves from the attitude we should have, and what is that?

Confidence

What do we typically call this type of prayer?

Intercessory

Notice that John enumerates three aspects of intercessory prayer:

1. The occasion prompting the intercession by the believer
2. The results of the intercession
3. The nature of the sin, with certain limitations.

“ If anyone ..” There are 4 types of conditional statements in Greek.

There are 4 “conditional” IF .;. THEN phrases in Greek

1. First Class – the IF clause is assumed to be true
 - a. Col 3:1
2. Second Class – the IF clause is assumed to be false
 - a. Luk 7:39
3. Third Class – the IF clause is probably true, but it is uncertain
 - a. 1Cor 13:2; Heb 6:3
4. Fourth Class – the IF clause is possibly true, but it is also uncertain
 - a. 1Pet 3:14

So, which ‘class’ do you think this belongs in? We may think it is #1, because Christians always commit sins, but the focus is on ‘seeing’ not ‘sinning.’ If anyone sees...

What does the word “sees” imply?

Overt action or course of action.

What does John mean by “his brother?”

1. A fellow, regenerate Christian
2. A professing Christian, not necessarily regenerate
3. A neighbor, a brother in a general sense

Con #1 ; A regenerate believer does not need to be given life by God; he already has it. But this would limit “life” to mean ‘eternal life,’ not necessarily physical life.

Con #2: There is no clear instance of a professing (as opposed to a genuine) Christian being called “his brother” in John’s writings.

Con #3: The same is true of brother as a synonym for neighbor; but see Luke 10:29ff

I think view #2 makes the best sense. Readers were to regard members of the Christian community as their brothers, without judgmentally determining the sincerity of their faith, unless they departed, as did the heretics

See 1Jn 2:19

“committing a sin...”

Literally, “sinning sin.” The noun without the article stresses the character of the sin as opposed to the identity or degree of any particular sin. This conveys the idea of a regular pattern of sinful behavior which reveals a certain, unmistakable quality or character.

“Not leading to death...”

Literally, “not facing death.” It carries the idea of moving towards something – in this case, death. John repeats this phrase 3x in this verse and the next, in addition to its opposite: “A sin facing death.”

So, what “death” is John referring to here? Physical or Spiritual?

Physical

Num 18:22, Deut 22:25-26, Isa 22:14

Jubilees 33:12-18 (*Pseudepigrapha*) “Little Genesis”

13. And do thou, Moses, command the children of Israel that they observe this word; for it (entails) a punishment of death; and it is unclean, and there is no atonement for ever to atone for the man who has committed this, but he is to be put to death and slain, and stoned with stones, and rooted out from the midst of the people of our God. ...

18. And do thou, Moses, write (it) down for Israel that they may observe it, and do according to these words, and not commit a sin unto death; for the Lord our God is judge, who respects not persons and accepts not gifts

Spiritual

There is no basis for thinking John's audience would have been taught to fear sin based on whether the sin would lead to physical death or not

See GJn 8:51; 11:26: The one who believes will never die (spiritually)

In GJn, physical death is presented as not something to fear, but as a fruit-bearing act (e.g. GJn 12:24).

It is contrasted with eternal life

My view is that John intends to the Greek *thanatos* mean Spiritual death.

So, all this sets the background for the "sin not leading to/leading to death."

Robert Thomas gives no less than 7 possibilities for what John may be referring to as "sin leading towards death." Here are the top possibilities:

1. The denial of Christ as Savior (total apostasy)
2. Blasphemy of the HS
3. A specific deadly sin (adultery, rape, murder)
4. It refers specifically to the heretics' refusal to see Christ coming in the flesh and the Son of God.

He says that they are not all mutually exclusive (with the exception of #3), but he says whatever view one adopts, the interpreter must always keep the context of John's letter in mind.

Mark 3:28-30 (Mat 12:31)

Blasphemy vs the Holy Spirit = attributing Christ's work (specifically His miracles) to Satan *when one knows they originate with God.*

As John Gill writes: "it is a despiteful usage of the Spirit of grace, an opposing, contradicting, and denying the operations wrought, or doctrines

revealed by him, against a man's own light and conscience, out of wilful and obstinate malice, on purpose to lessen the glory of God, and gratify his own lusts: such was the sin of the Scribes and Pharisees; who, though they knew the miracles of Christ were wrought by the Spirit of God, yet maliciously and obstinately imputed them to the devil, with a view to obscure the glory of Christ, and indulge their own wicked passions and resentments against him; which sin was unpardonable at that present time, as well as under that dispensation then to come”

Heb 10:26 cp Heb 5:2

The word translated “God” in “God gives life” is actually the Greek *autw* = “he.” This leaves us with a problem of interpretation.

5. "he [the petitioner] should ask, and he [the petitioner] will grant life to him [the sinner], namely, to those who sin not to death." it is questionable whether the author (for whom God is the ultimate source of life) would say that one believer could 'give' life to another.
6. Another option is to see God as the subject of $\delta\acute{\omega}\sigma\epsilon\iota$ in [1Jo 5:16](#) and the Giver of life to the sinner: "he [the petitioner] should ask, and he [God] will grant life to him [the sinner], namely, to those who sin not to death." This is far more consistent theologically with the author's perspective on God as the Giver of life everywhere else, but it is awkward grammatically because it involves a shift in subjects from the person who makes the request to God and back to the person who makes the request.
7. "he [the petitioner] should ask, and he [God] will grant life to him [the petitioner], with reference to [his praying for] those who sin not to death."

Although this is a difficult and awkward construction no matter what solution one takes, on the whole the second alternative seems most probable. See 1Jn 5:11.