

## A Prayer That Does Not Move God

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### 1 John 5:14-17

#### I. INTRODUCTION

- A. We are living in a generation that is rapidly losing all respect for authority; people no longer seem to be afraid of the consequences of their rebellion. We see this in ever so many areas today: children do not respect and fear their parents, citizens do not respect and fear government and men do not respect and fear God.
- B. Scripture tells us that *“the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.”* Without a fear of God, there will never be submission of children to parents, submission of wives to husbands, submission of people to government. Until a person sees that this world is governed by God’s laws, he will never respect authority.
- C. Those who are not Christians should fear God, for He is a consuming fire, whose wrath burns hot against sinners. He has told the world that it is appointed unto men once to die but after this there will be a judgment.
- D. Those who are Christians should also fear and respect God, for God is a loving-authoritarian, who desires holiness of life from His people. God cannot eternally judge the Christian for his sins because Christ was judged in the place of the Christian; the Christian’s eternal destiny is set. But God will and does discipline His children for acts of sin because He is holy, righteous and just, and he cannot overlook sin. Often God’s discipline for a child of God is very severe, even resulting in physical death for the Christian.
- E. The most extreme kind of discipline God may bring to the wayward Christian is the “sin that leads to death” or “sin unto death,” which the Apostle John mentions in 1 John 5:16-17.

#### II. THE PRAYER THAT GOD ALWAYS ANSWERS 5:14-15

- A. *“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.”* – Here is one of the great promises of scripture, for the Christian is assured that God will hear his requests if he asks according to God’s will. A Christian is free to make any petition to the Lord but when he prays in accordance with God’s will, there will be an answer to prayer. It is so very important that the Christian is in fellowship with Christ, obedient to God, and aware of the Bible promises and principles when praying, so that he does not ask amiss or ask to consume something upon his own lust. Christians cannot command or “wheel and deal” God to do things just because they want them – they must be submitted to God’s will and pray for God’s will!

*I ran across a girls wedding prayer that shows how our prayers are often very selfish and demanding of God.*

*“Dear God. I can hardly believe that this is my wedding day. I know I haven’t been able to spend much time with you lately, with all the rush of getting ready for today, and I’m sorry. I guess, too, that I feel a little guilty when I try to pray about all this, since Larry still isn’t a Christian. But oh, Father, I love him so much, what else can I do? I just couldn’t give him up. Oh, You must save him, some way, somehow.*

*You know how much I’ve prayed for him, and the way we’ve discussed the gospel together. I’ve tried not to appear too religious, I know, but that’s because I didn’t want to scare him off. Yet he isn’t antagonistic and I can’t understand why he hasn’t responded. Oh, if he only were a Christian.*

*Dear Father, please bless our marriage. I don’t want to disobey You, but I do love him and want to be his wife, so please be with us and please don’t spoil my wedding day.”*

- B. **“And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.”** – The Christian has the absolute assurance that when he asks according to God’s will, whatever the request may be, it shall be answered. Someone may ask, “Why pray at all if God’s will is already determined?” The answer is simple that God has ordained prayer as a means to reach His ends. It is through prayer that the creature shows his utter dependence upon the Creator, and the Lord delights to bless His children as they ask Him for things. It should also be noted that the Lord Jesus said, **“Men should always to pray and not give up.” (Lk. 18:1).** Any prayer in the sovereign will of God, God must and will answer. What a challenge to pray. **Matt 7:7 Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you.”**

### III. THE PRAYER THAT GOD WILL NOT ANSWER 5:16-17

- A. Introduction: Verses 16-17 must be seen in context and the context is about prayer. These two verses are an illustration of a request that is in the will of God, as contrasted with one that is not in the will of God. “A sin that does not unto death” is the kind which permits a concerned brother to ask God for deliverance from that sin for an erring brother and the will of God is to grant that request. “A sin that leads to death” is the kind to which God has already determined His course of action and no prayer is going to change His mind. Therefore, it is useless to pray, for this prayer will not move God.
- B. What Is The Sin Unto Death?

#### 1. Views

- a. Mortal Sin (R.C.C.): The sin unto death is some specific sin so terrible as to be unforgivable such as suicide, murder, idolatry, etc. This give rise to the Roman Catholic idea of mortal and venial sins. The Greek does not say “a sin unto death” but “a sin that leads to death”, referring this not to some specific sin but to sin in general. Any specific sin, however, could lead to the sin unto death.
- b. Blasphemy Against The Holy Spirit: The sin unto death relates to spiritual death, not physical death, and is associated with apostasy. An apostate is someone who has made a profession of faith in Christ but begins to drift away and ultimately comes to the place where he actually blasphemes the name of the Lord Jesus. This concept is taught in the Bible but it is not taught in 1 Jn. 5:16.
- c. Physical Death For a Rebellious Christian: A Christian may become very rebellious and bitter in his Christian life. A Christian who repeatedly walks according to the flesh has lost his usefulness to the Lord on this earth and God must discipline him. The most extreme discipline that God can bring to a Christian is physical death. The Christian is saved but his reward in heaven will be little. Once a person is saved he can never be lost but if he becomes a carnal Christian, God will discipline and if there is no change of life towards Christ, then God has the right to check a believer out of this world. Saved but useless! What a pitiful state to be in.

C. ***“If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death.”*** – This verse must be taken with verse 17, which says, “All wrongdoing (unrighteousness) is sin, and there is a sin that does not lead to death.” All wrongdoing is sin but there is sin with a certain characteristic that leads to physical death. Sin that does not lead to death arises largely out of ignorance. It is a sin where someone is simply doing something which they may have a vague idea is wrong, but they have no understanding of the implications of it, no awareness of how bad it is. If you see your brother committing that kind of a sin, ask of God, and God will give life for those whose sin is not unto death. God will withhold the judgment of physical death and grant opportunity for the renewal of life.

*David was heavily disciplined by God for his affair with Bathsheba, and apparently he expected to die by physical death. But he repented and God removed the threat of death but he suffered severely all his life for that sin (cf. 2 Sam. 12:9-13).*

Repentance reverses God’s judgment.

- D. ***“There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that.”*** – This is physical death for a carnal Christian. What is the element that turns ordinary sin into the sin unto death? It is the element of wanton, presumptuous action in the face of clear knowledge that it is wrong. It is persistence in a determined course of action when you know that God has said it is wrong. There are many examples of sin unto death in the Bible:
1. Moses (Num. 20): God commanded Moses to speak unto the rock and out from the rock would flow water for Israel. Moses lost his cool and in anger struck the rock. God in grace gave the water but Moses was forbidden to take the children of Israel into the land and he was left to die on Mount Nebo. Why? Because of disobedience. Disobedience can have serious consequences.
  2. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5): These two had kept back part of their possessions, giving another part to the Lord’s work. But they lied to the Apostles about the part that was not given. This was willful disobedience and they were struck dead immediately. Dishonesty and lying can have serious consequences.
  3. Drunken Christians (1 Cor. 11): Some of these Christians were partaking of the Lord’s Table in a drunken state, showing selfishness and ill-behavior towards other Christians. Thus Paul says ***“many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.” (11:30)***. Perhaps much of the physical weakness that is apparent among Christians today may arise from this very cause. Not all physical weakness comes from this, not all premature deaths arise from this, but some very likely do. It arises from willful rebellion against clear knowledge of the truth.

*I had a good friend that was from a Christian home and was probably saved sometime in college. He was an active witness, led some people to Christ and went off to seminary. In seminary, he began to drift from the Lord. He left school and went out in the secular world to become a lawyer. He became quite immoral, living with a woman, drinking, and involving himself in all kinds of immorality. Yet through all this he still called himself a Christian and even witnessed once in a while. He married an unsaved girl and became a successful lawyer. He had everything, including his own airplane. He loved to do stunt flying and one day he did a loop and the plane crashed to the ground. A young man of 29 years of age was dead. An accident? I think not. I’m convinced that this was the discipline of God upon this rebellious young man. This man was a bigger hindrance to God than a help on this earth, so God took him home.*

*I had a preacher friend who had a man in his congregation that owned a liquor store and he was a professing Christian. The man was under great*

*conviction about being in the alcohol business as a Christian but just did not want to get out because he was doing very well financially. He knew he was wrong. The first judgment of God was that his store caught on fire but he still didn't learn and just built the business back up again. The next judgment of God came just two days after the doctors had pronounced this man physically fit. He died very suddenly of a heart attack. Just an accident? I hardly think so. This was the discipline of God.*

- E. John's point is that if a professing Christian goes on in rebellion and shows no signs of repentance, there is nothing we can do and there no need to pray. There is nothing you can do but let God's judgment wake him up. Perhaps God in grace will deal patiently with him, give him a time of sickness or weakness, and that will bring him to his senses. But if not, God will take him home.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

- A. Do you realize, Christian friends, that you are to reflect the character of God to the world about you? If there is a willful determination to disgrace Him in the eyes of others, as Moses did, God will say, "All right, that's enough. You are useless to me on the earth. I can't trust you anymore. Come on home." And home you go! However, there won't be a very happy homecoming in heaven, for the Lord will not be able to say, "Well done my good and faithful servant."
- B. For you here this morning without Christ in your heart, think about this: If God's discipline is so great upon His children, how much more severe will His wrath come down upon those who are not children of God through faith in Christ Jesus? Non-Christian, unbeliever, rejecter of Christ, you have only eternal judgment waiting for you after this life. Best you fear God, for unless you trust in Christ and turn from your evil ways, you will meet Him who is Consuming Fire.