

## Lesson 15, Purpose, Prayer, and Assurance, 1 John 5:13-21

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<sup>13</sup> I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. <sup>14</sup> And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. <sup>15</sup> And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

<sup>16</sup> If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that. <sup>17</sup> All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.

<sup>18</sup> We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.

<sup>19</sup> We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

<sup>20</sup> And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. <sup>21</sup> Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

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We now come to our final lesson with John's closing thoughts for his beloved children in the faith. Closing thoughts in a letter are often used to highlight the most important message the author wants his readers to take away from the reading, and perhaps a reminder of the point of why the letter was written in the first place. John closed this epistle with exactly these: his purpose for writing, and the important messages which he wanted his children to hold in their hearts and minds. John knew the people to whom he wrote, and that they were very dear to him is evident throughout. Our Father knows each of his beloved children even better than John knew his, and his love for us is also evident throughout John's epistle. So read these final words of John as the Holy Spirit intended: written to you, dear one, to remind you of important truths which you are to hold in your heart and mind.

### Purpose

- 1.) To whom did John write his epistle, and for what purpose? [13]
- 2.) John goes straight from reminding us of our assurance that we have eternal life, to speaking of the confidence that we have in the Son of God (14). How does this assurance build confidence? [4:16-18; Heb. 4:14-16]

### Prayer

- 3.) This confidence leads to prayer (14-15), but not without conditions. Under what condition does God hear our prayers? [14; Matt. 6:9-10, 26:39]

4.) Verse 15 seems, at first blush, to say that we get whatever we ask for. The Apostle Paul certainly believed, obeyed, and prayed with right motives, and yet, God didn't answer every one of his prayers the way Paul wished. Read Galatians 4:13-15 and 2 Corinthians 12:7-8; what was Paul's request, and then God's purpose for not giving Paul what he asked? [2 Cor. 12:9-10]?

5.) When Jesus' friend Lazarus fell ill, his sisters sent word to Jesus, knowing that he could heal him. What was his response? [John 11:5-6]

Why? [11:4, 14, 25-27, 40-42]

And the result? [John 11:43-45]

Sisters, when we pray, we are coming to the God who loved us and sent his one and only Son to be the propitiation for our sins (4:9-10); the God who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all [and therefore], how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? (Rom. 8:32). John wants us to know that when we pray according to God's will he hears us, but we must also remember that we are bringing our requests and laying them before a holy, loving, and all-wise God who knows far better than we what is best for us. "This is the God who... always answers our prayers with either 'Yes,' or 'Let me give you something better.'"<sup>1</sup>

6.) If we are to pray according to God's will, we ought to know what it is. What is God's will for Christians? [Rom. 8:28-29; 1 Thess. 4:3, 1 Peter 1:14-16]

There are prayers throughout the Bible which, because they are inspired by the Holy Spirit, we can be certain that they accord with God's will. The entire book of Psalms, the prayers of the saints of old, Jesus's prayers recorded in the Gospels, and the prayers of Paul in his epistles are beautiful examples of prayers which the Lord delights to hear and to answer. But God's will sings forth from every page of Scripture, and therefore all of Scripture may be useful for informing and shaping our prayers.

7.) Read back through 1 John, or choose one of the following passages of Scripture, and write a prayer for yourself or for someone else, according to the will of God revealed in his Holy Word. (*You may want to use a separate sheet of paper*) [2 Cor. 13:1-7; Eph. 4:1-16; Phil 2:1-16; Phil 4:4-13; 1 Peter 3:1-6]

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<sup>1</sup> Megan Hill, *Praying Together* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 52.

In verses 16-17 John moves from personal petitions in prayer to intercession, and we come to a set of perplexing questions: what are sins that do and do not lead to death, and who are we not praying for? John cannot be categorizing sins as minor/deadly, as in Roman Catholicism, for scripture is clear that all sin deserves the death penalty (Rom. 6:23; James 1:15).

8.) What has John already written to us about how believers are to deal with sin? [1:9]

9.) Why are we forgiven and cleansed when we confess? [2:1-2]

10.) Therefore, when a believer sins, does it lead to death? [3:14; 5:13]

11.) If this is true of every believer, how then are we to treat our brothers and sisters in the faith when they sin? [16; Gal. 6:1-2; James 5:15]

Throughout his epistle, John has exhorted us to love one another. What could be more loving than praying for one another? When we bring our brothers and sisters before the throne of grace for any reason, it is an act of love. When we see them sinning it is our duty and privilege to intercede for them, asking our gracious Father to restore them to fellowship with him and with us, and to restore the joy of their salvation (Psalm 51:12) which, when believers sin, is broken. When another believer's sin has spilled over and hurt us, our first response may be to turn our backs and abandon them in their sin. But God exhorts us to love one another *earnestly*, because such love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8). Sisters, let us pray for one another, ~~even~~ especially when we have been hurt, for, "if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another... if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us" (4:11-12).

12.) John begins verse 16 writing of a "brother committing a sin" for whom we ought to pray. His next sentence, about one for whom we ought not to pray, does not grammatically imply "a brother." Of whom might he be speaking? [2:18-19, 22; 3:10; 5:10b, 12b]

13.) What, therefore, is the "sin that leads to death"? [Mark 3:29; John 3:18-20; 8:24]

### Final Assurances

John follows this warning about the seriousness of sin and hardness of heart with three assurances of comfort for believers, and not fluffy comfort, but rock-solid-assurance-style comfort.

14.) In verses 18-20, what do “we know”?

15.) Who is “he who was born of God” who protects “everyone who has been born of God”? [4:9, 14-15; John 1:14; 10:28]

16.) From what or whom does he protect us? [18-19; 3:8; John 17:15]

17.) What are we to understand? [20; John 17:2-3, 2 Cor. 5:17]

18.) How has Jesus given us this understanding? [20; Joel 2:28-29; John 7:37-39; Titus 2:4-7]

19.) John finishes his epistle in the same manner with which he opened it: no formalities. What is his final appeal to his dear children, and, in light of verse 20, how does it square with the answer to question 15, above? [21; Phil. 2:12-13]

Finally, in closing, Read again John’s purpose statements for writing this epistle, in 1:3-4; 2:1; and 5:13. How has the Holy Spirit accomplished these purposes in your heart and mind as we have together mined this treasure of God’s word through our study of 1 John?