



Pray for Those Whose Sin is Not Unto Death!

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¹⁴ ... that **if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. ...**

¹⁶ **If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. ¹⁷ All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death.**

1 John 5: 14-17 NKJV

There has been so much “death” being spoken in America and around the world, that for the past year I have been praying that the Holy Spirit would speak “life” to His people. My recent ongoing intense prayer is that my will and the will of His people will be drawn into greater alignment with the Father. I also found myself asking that any of our personal or corporate resistance toward walking in His will would be brought into the light, with opportunity to resolve it well. It is under His wings that He promises refuge when the world bears down in enmity!

Then these familiar verses from John took on another depth. Historically, these verses have been an enigma. I see a community aspect here that had escaped me earlier. “If anyone sees his brother...” Commentators have observed that it may not literally refer to “seeing” the sin, but perhaps more perceiving that a sin issue may be in process. The “brother” reference context suggests it is a believer. The commanded appropriate response *is* to pray and ask for life for those not sinning unto death. (He **will** ask...) I was struck by not only our **privilege** to speak to our Father in prayer on behalf of others, but now also our **responsibility** in the assembly to do so!

How does one know the will of God, and what exactly is sin that is not unto death?

The complexity of understanding His will is great and limits me to a few simple observations here. I agree with John Piper’s observation that there are two aspects: His **sovereign will**, that will not be

changed and His **will of command**, which we can and do frequently break.¹ We cannot change those things beyond us, but we can and must address that which is within us to bring us more into alignment with His will. This cannot be accomplished quickly, but is a byproduct of study of the Word, discipleship, and ongoing commitment to mature to become more like Messiah. Growing in knowledge of Him and His Word ultimately leads to the fruit; what proceeds from one who belongs to our Abba will increasingly match Him! (Ephesians 4: 15) It is my position that this maturity process happens most successfully within covenant relational fellowship groups, with personal and corporate shepherding.

“Sin unto death” is difficult to understand. Literally, it may refer to all the commands that explicitly state which sins are punishable by death, but then Roman 6:23 tells us that the wages of **all** sin is death! James wrote that failing to do what is known to be good is also sin. (4:17)

His will is that none should perish! (2 Peter 3:9) We can join in praying in His will for life for those who belong to Him but who fall into sin. Though we may pray for their willingness to repent, we are NOT to ask life for those who have already entered into the realm of death; those who habitually walk in sinful lifestyles. We may not ask for life for one apart from their repentance, confession and return.

It is acknowledged in Hebrews 10:26 that there remains no more sacrifice for **intentional** sin which seems to confirm the concern with willful ongoing defiance of His commands. This would take one into the realm of death.

So when we **do** pray for life for one whose sin is not unto death, it is not “praying away any consequences” of sin. To do so would not be in the will of our Elohim. Sin must have consequences because it is often this that will lead the person to repentance! As a believer, we are joining with another believer who by definition will also be bringing any sin matters before Him in prayer.

As our Messiah directed us to watch and pray with Him, so do I think that we must wrestle with these words to fully grasp how we are to intercede for one another in our assemblies.

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¹ **Desiring God Foundation**, Piper, John; Website: desiringGod.org