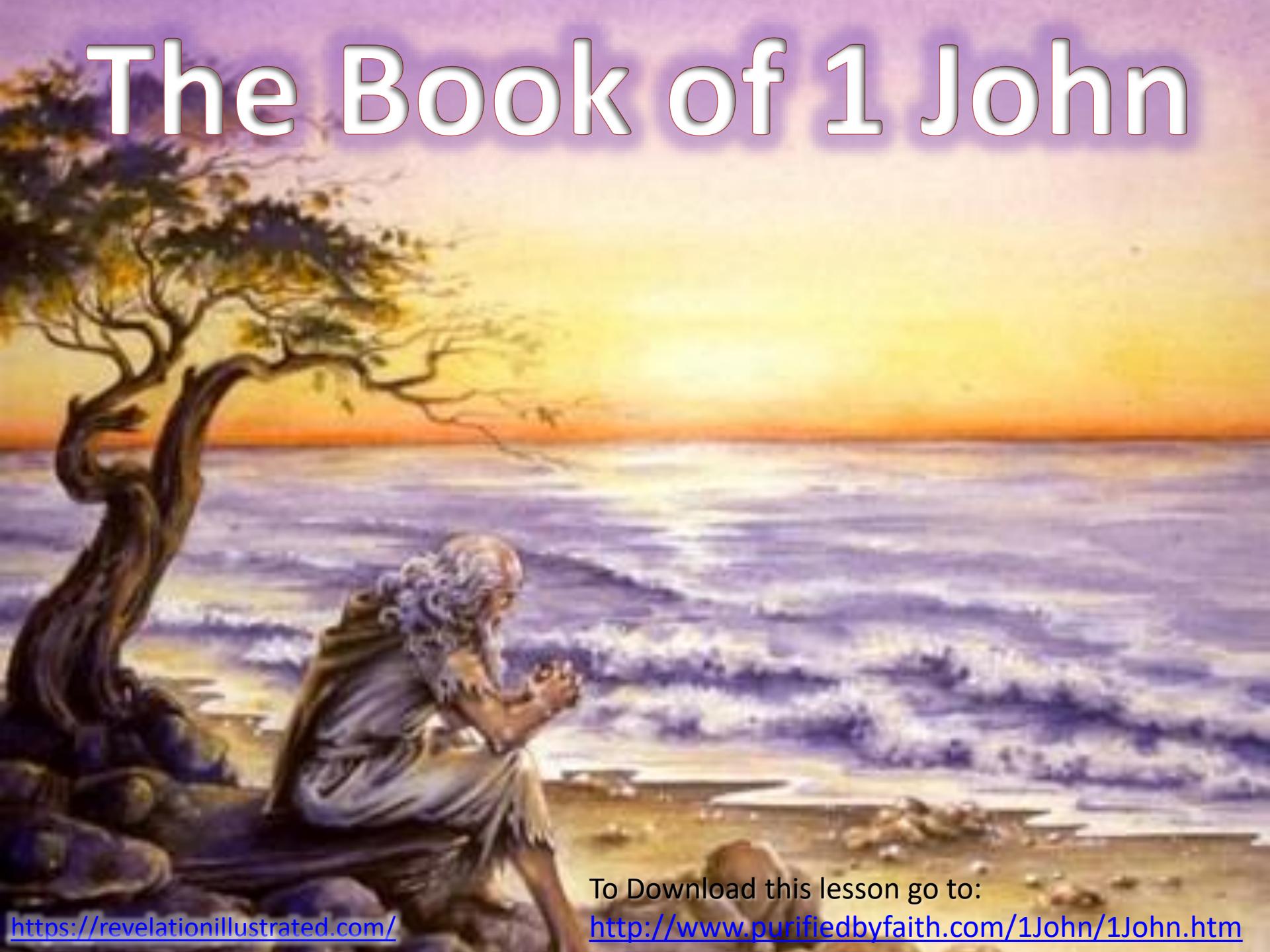


The Book of 1 John



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Outline of 1 John

- 1:1-4 - *Prologue: John Introduces the Major Theme of the Letter - FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD*
- 1:5-2:28 - *The First Presentation of the Three Tests of FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD: RIGHTEOUSNESS, LOVE and BELIEF in Jesus*
- 2:29-4:6 - *The Second Presentation of the Three Tests of FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD: RIGHTEOUSNESS, LOVE and BELIEF in Jesus*
- 4:7-5:21 - *The Third Presentation of the Three Tests of FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD: RIGHTEOUSNESS, LOVE and BELIEF in Jesus*

4:7-5:21

*The Third Presentation of the Three Tests of FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD: **RIGHTEOUSNESS**, **LOVE** and **BELIEF** in Jesus*

- 4:7-5:3a – *Christian LOVE*
 - 4:7-12 – The Source of *LOVE*
 - 4:13-16 – The *Synthesis* of *LOVE* and *BELIEF* – true belief is the vital ground of Christian love
 - 4:17-5:1 – The Effect and Motives of *LOVE*
 - 5:2-3a – The *Synthesis* of *LOVE* and *RIGHTEOUSNESS* – we love God by keeping His commandments
- 5:3b-21 – *Christian BELIEF*
 - 5:3b-4 – The *Synthesis* of *BELIEF* and *RIGHTEOUSNESS* – in belief lies the power of obedience
 - 5:5-12 – The Contents, Basis, and Issue of Christian *BELIEF*
 - 5:13-21 – The Certainties of Christian *BELIEF*

1 John 5:13-21

The Certainties of Christian Belief

¹³ *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.* ¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* ¹⁵ *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.* ¹⁶ *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.* ¹⁷ *All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.* ¹⁸ *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.* ¹⁹ *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* ²⁰ *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.* ²¹ *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

5:13-21 - The Certainties of Christian Belief

This concluding section pulls together many of the major ideas found in 1 John, as the following comparison shows:

Subject	Conclusion	Previous Sections
Eternal life	5:13,20	1:1-2; 2:25; 5:11-12
Belief	5:13	2:23; 5:1, 10
Confident prayer	5:14-17	3:21-23
Practice of sin	5:18	1:6; 2:4; 3:9
New birth, children of God, (born) of God	5:18, 19	2:29; 3:1, 9, 10; 4:4, 6, 7; 5:1
Evil one (the devil)	5:18, 19	2:13-14; 3:8, 10-11
World	5:19	2:15; 3:1, 13; 4:4-5; 5:4
Incarnation	5:20	1:1-2; 3:5, 8; 4:9
Christ's Sonship	5:18, 20	2:22-24; 3:8; 4:9, 10, 14; 5:5, 9-12

5:13-21

The Certainties of Christian Belief

- The conclusion of this letter is markedly different from those of most other New Testament letters.
- Most of Paul's letters, for example, close with personal greetings and miscellaneous instructions that are added almost as a postscript to the body of the document (cf. Rom. 16:1-27; Col. 4:7-18; 2 Tim. 4:9-22 etc.).
- The closing instructions in those letters have little to do with the main thrust of the letter itself.
- In 1 John, however, the concluding section (5:13-21) is an integral part of the letter, a genuine conclusion of the author's line of thought.

- John begins this section by saying, “*I write **these things...***
that you may know that you have eternal life.”?”
- What “*things*” does John have in mind?
- John **could** just be referring to the things he wrote in previous section (5:1-12)
- But, given the ideas that John advances in this letter, it seems more likely that John here is giving the purpose he had in writing the letter **as a whole**.

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1 John 5:13 - *I write these things* [the content of the letter as a whole] *to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.*

- John's readers had been disturbed by the denials and claims of the false teachers who:
 - Denied important elements of the message the readers had embraced at the beginning.
 - Claimed to be recipients of special revelation through the Spirit to which the readers were not privy.
- John's primary reason for writing the letter was to bolster his reader's assurance by counteracting the heresies of the false teachers.
- John sought to do this by pointing out that it was *his readers* who had *truly* received "*eternal life*" and who *truly* knew God, *not* the *false teachers*. John's readers had given *evidence* of their eternal life in that they:
 - Continued in the teaching first proclaimed by the eyewitnesses
 - Continued to obey the commands of the Lord
 - Loved the children of God

The reason that a just and holy God is free to bless us with answers to prayer, even though we are sinners who deserve condemnation, is that Jesus Christ died for our sins and turned away the wrath of God from us. Everything beneficial, which fallen human beings have ever experienced, was purchased at Calvary. And therefore, all answers to prayer are free gifts based on God's mercy.

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1 John 5:13-21

This is the **second** time in this letter that John speaks about believer's **confidence** in prayer:

- The **first time** (3:22-23), he linked confidence in prayer to pleasing God by **doing what he commanded** (believing in the name of his Son and loving fellow believers).
- **This time** he links the believers' confidence in prayer to their **assurance of eternal life** and their asking **according to God's will**.

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1 John 5:13-21

What does it mean to ask God “*according to His will*”?

- As used in the Bible, the phrase “God’s will” *sometimes* refers to that which God has **commanded** be done:
 - **John 9:31** - *We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him.*
 - **1 John 2:17** - *And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.*
 - **Ephesians 6:6** - *not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.*
- **At other times** “God’s will” refers to that which He has **ordained** will occur (as a part of His sovereign control of all things):
 - **Romans 9:19** - *You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?”*
 - **Ephesians 1:11** - *In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will...*
 - **James 4:15** - *Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.”*
- Given these **two significantly different meanings** of the phrase “God’s will”, which meaning does John have in mind when he talks about praying according to “His [God’s] will” in **1 John 5:14b**?

What does it mean to ask God “*according to his will*”?

- It is clear from other passages of scripture that we are **not** to pray for things that are **contrary** to what God has **commanded**, i.e., things that are sinful or in opposition to God’s Word:
 - **Psalm 66:18-19** - *If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer.*
 - **John 15:7** *If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*
 - **James 4:3** - *You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.*
- But in 1 John 5:14 we are told that *if we ask anything according to his will he hears us*:
- In this context, “to hear” means to give heed to what is asked, that is, responding positively to the request. That this is the case is confirmed in the next verse (5:15) where he says - *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.*
- But how can we pray in such a way that we **know** God will answer our prayer **affirmatively**?

What does it mean to ask God “*according to his will*”?

- Indeed other similar texts tell us that we should **believe** (i.e., have confidence) that we will receive what we have asked for:
 - **Mark 11:23-24** - *Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him.* ²⁴ *Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.*
- John Piper comments on this passage:
 - *The crucial question that rises out of such statements is, "How is such undoubting faith possible?" The only answer I can think of is that such undoubting faith is only possible if we know what God intends to do for those who believe. Or to put it another way, we can have undoubting faith if we know what God's will is in a particular situation. How can you keep from doubting if you don't know what God intends to do? How can anyone have assurance that the answer to his prayer will come to pass if he is not first assured that this is what God intends to do in response to his faith? There has to be a basis for faith; you can't just will to have no doubts if you are not sure that what you are asking for is what God intends to do.*

What does it mean to ask God “*according to his will*”?

- So, in other words, if we pray according to God’s will, His **sovereign will**, for that which He has **ordained**, then we **know** (without a doubt) that He will answer our prayer affirmatively! And that is exactly what I think 1 John 5:14-15 is saying!
- Piper comments further:
 - *The question that cries out to be answered, therefore, is: “How can we know what God wills to do in response to prayer, so that we can ask Him and trust Him for it?” How do we find out what God intends to do in response to faith? There are two answers:*
 - *One is that God reveals much of what He intends to do through the scripture*
 - *The other answer is that God can reveal His intention apart from scripture privately to an individual or group.*

What does it mean to ask God “*according to his will*”?

- In regards to God revealing His intention ***apart*** from scripture, Piper hastens to add:
 - *I mention this with **some hesitancy** because I have never in my life experienced it. God has never communicated to **me** what He intends to do any other way than by the Scripture. But I think He **could** and so I will leave open this possibility of how we can find out what God aims to do in response to faith. The more **usual** way we discover what God wills to do is by reading his revealed word in the Bible.*
- But how does God communicate what He intends specifically to do in ***our*** life through the ***Bible***?

What does it mean to ask God “*according to his will*”?

- Piper mentions **four** teachings from the Bible which show us what God **ordains** for those who believe:
 - God promises to **save** all who call upon Him.
 - **Romans 10:13** - *For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*
 - God intends to **sanctify** those whom He has redeemed.
 - **Romans 6:22** - *But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to **sanctification** and its end, eternal life.*
 - If we will seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, the **necessities** of our life will be **supplied**.
 - **Matthew 6:33** - *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*
 - **Philippians 4:19** - *And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*
 - In everything **God works for the good** of those who love Him.
 - **Romans 8:28** - *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*
- In addition to these teachings, God also promises that **all** things will be done for **His glory** (Romans 11:36). Therefore we can be sure that a prayer that God be glorified will always be answered affirmatively.

What does it mean to ask God “*according to his will*”?

- Finally, Piper addresses those requests we make which fall **outside** of those things which we know from Scripture to be “*according to His [ordained] will*”:
 - *Many of our prayers will be for things we do **not** know to be God's will. So we will whisper, "Yet, not my will but Thine be done." And we will believe, on the basis of Romans 8:28, that if our specific request is **denied** it is because God is preparing something **better** for us. This fits so well with:*
 - **Matthew 7:9-11** - *Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are **evil**, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much **more** will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!*
 - *That is what God will **always** give in response to our prayers - good things. "No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11). If God denies our bread or our fish it is **not** to give us a **stone** or a **serpent**, but **cake and steak**.*

In verse 16, John **amplifies** the theme of prayer by applying the general statements of 5:14-15 to the particular need of prayer for believers who fall into sin.

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1 John 5:13-21

This prayer is not now a case of ***petition***, but of ***intercession***. The assurance of eternal life which the Christian enjoys ought not lead him into a preoccupation with himself to the neglect of others.

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On the contrary, a Christian should recognize his duty in love to care for his brother in need, whether the need which he sees be ***material*** (as in 1 John 3:17-18) or, as here, ***spiritual***. If any man see his brother sin. He cannot say “am I my brother’s keeper?” and do nothing.

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The promise of “*life*” for those who sin is **restricted** to the case where the person involved is a “*brother*” (a believer) who has committed a “***sin not leading to death***”.

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1 John 5:13-21

- In one sense, **all** sin “leads to death”:
 - Romans 6:23 - *For the wages of sin is death*
- But what I believe John has in view here is a sin that results in that person receiving **eternal damnation**.

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What is John talking about when he refers to the “*sin that leads to death*?”

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1 John 5:13-21

What is the “*sin that leads to death*”?

- Various things have been suggested:
 - Mortal sin versus a venial sin
 - **Response:** There is no New Testament warrant for such an arbitrary classification of sins.
 - A sin that causes a believer to *lose* their salvation
 - **Response:** This is impossible in light of Jesus’ declaration that He gives His sheep eternal life and “they shall never perish” (John 10:28)
 - A sin committed by a believer (like those mentioned in 1 Corinthians 11:30) who God then removes from this life:
 - **1 Corinthians 11:29-30** - *For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.³⁰ That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.*
 - **Response:** This would make the death here *physical* death, whereas elsewhere in 1 John death is *spiritual* death (3:14) and life is spiritual life (2:25; 3:14-15; 5:11-13).
 - This would also seem out of keeping with the immediate context where the “*life*” with which this death is contrasted is *spiritual (not physical)* life.

What is the “*sin that leads to death*”?

- John seems to have in mind a pattern of sinful behavior and apostasy that will surely result in eternal damnation.
- Probably John is referring to sinful behavior like that of the false teachers, who after having been a part of the local church, have now rejected the Gospel and left the church thereby showing that they are ***not*** true believers and are therefore headed for eternal damnation.
- This would explain why John does not advocate praying for someone who is sinning in this way (see 5:16b)

The promise of 5:16a is that the repentant believer will, in answer to prayer, be granted life on the last day along with other believers.

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John is saying, then, that if you see a fellow Christian (“brother”) ensnared in a sin, out of love for your brother you should pray that God will deliver him from that sin, and keep it from becoming part of an unbroken pattern of sin which, if that were to occur, would prove that he was not a brother after all!

¹³ *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.* ¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* ¹⁵ *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.* ¹⁶ *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.* ¹⁷ *All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.* ¹⁸ *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.* ¹⁹ *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* ²⁰ *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.* ²¹ *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

Instead, if he truly is a brother (and not one who has apostatized), we can be **confident** that God will continue to **sanctify** the brother for whom we pray (because God does this for all believers), and that God will give him eternal life on the last day.

¹³ *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.* ¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* ¹⁵ *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.* ¹⁶ *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.* ¹⁷ *All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.* ¹⁸ *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.* ¹⁹ *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* ²⁰ *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.* ²¹ *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

1 John 5:13-21

Note also that our duty to **pray** for a sinning brother, **does not replace** or do away with our duty to lovingly **confront** the brother concerning his sin, as taught elsewhere (Matthew 18:15-20; Luke 17:3; Galatians 6:1-2).

¹³ *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.* ¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* ¹⁵ *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.* ¹⁶ *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.* ¹⁷ *All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.* ¹⁸ *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.* ¹⁹ *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* ²⁰ *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.* ²¹ *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

1 John 5:13-21

John reminds us that his instructions to pray for a sinning believer do not apply to so-called “believers” (such as the false teachers) who have apostatized from the true Gospel (the sin that ultimately leads to or results in eternal death).

¹³ *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.* ¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* ¹⁵ *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.* ¹⁶ *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.* ¹⁷ *All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.* ¹⁸ *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.* ¹⁹ *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* ²⁰ *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.* ²¹ *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

1 John 5:13-21

John does **not recommend** that his readers pray for those, like the false teachers, who persist in apostasy. On the other hand he does **not forbid** that they pray for those who commit this sin either - though he does seem to be discouraging it.

¹³ *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.* ¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* ¹⁵ *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.* ¹⁶ *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.*** ¹⁷ *All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.* ¹⁸ *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.* ¹⁹ *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* ²⁰ *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.* ²¹ *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

1 John 5:13-21

Apparently there comes a point when the energy we are spending praying for someone who is persisting in sin should be redirected to another person. Just when that point comes, John does not make specific.

¹³ *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.* ¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* ¹⁵ *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.* ¹⁶ *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.*** ¹⁷ *All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.* ¹⁸ *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.* ¹⁹ *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* ²⁰ *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.* ²¹ *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

1 John 5:13-21

The reinforcement here of the distinction between sins that lead to death and those that do not seems to function as an **assurance** to John's readers that, though they may fall into sin **from time to time**, their sins do not lead to (eternal) death, because John believes his readers are genuine believers.

¹³ *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.* ¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* ¹⁵ *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.* ¹⁶ *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.* ¹⁷ *All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.* ¹⁸ *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.* ¹⁹ *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* ²⁰ *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.* ²¹ *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

1 John 5:13-21

John further reassures his readers by reminding them of their privileged position in Christ. This desire to reassure is reflected in the fact that each of the next three verses begins with the words “*we know*”, as John includes his readers with himself, reminding them of all they share in Christ.

¹³ *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.* ¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* ¹⁵ *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.* ¹⁶ *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.* ¹⁷ *All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.* ¹⁸ *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.* ¹⁹ *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* ²⁰ *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.* ²¹ *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

In the *first* “*we know*”, John repeats a teaching that he has already given earlier:

- 1 John 3:9 - *No one born of God makes a practice of sinning...*

John uses the present tense here as he did earlier, indicating that he is referring, **not** to *occasional* sin, but an *ongoing process* of sin.

¹³ *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.* ¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* ¹⁵ *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.* ¹⁶ *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.* ¹⁷ *All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.* ¹⁸ *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.* ¹⁹ *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* ²⁰ *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.* ²¹ *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

1 John 5:13-21

In 3:9 the basis for the readers not continuing to sin was that they were born of God and God's "seed" remained in them. Here in 5:18 the basis of their not sinning is put differently: "*he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.*"

¹³ *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.* ¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* ¹⁵ *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.* ¹⁶ *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.* ¹⁷ *All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.* ¹⁸ *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.* ¹⁹ *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* ²⁰ *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.* ²¹ *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

1 John 5:13-21

In 1 John **most** references to being “*born of God*” relate to **believers** (2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18). However the reference here in 5:18 to “*he who was born of God*” is best interpreted as a reference to Jesus himself.

¹³ *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.* ¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* ¹⁵ *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.* ¹⁶ *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.* ¹⁷ *All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.* ¹⁸ *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.* ¹⁹ *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* ²⁰ *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.* ²¹ *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

1 John 5:13-21

That this is an appropriate interpretation is supported by the fact that in the **Gospel** of John Jesus is portrayed as the one who spiritually protects his disciples:

- John 17:12,15 - *While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me... ¹⁵ I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.*

¹³ *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.* ¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* ¹⁵ *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.* ¹⁶ *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.* ¹⁷ *All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.* ¹⁸ *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.* ¹⁹ *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* ²⁰ *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.* ²¹ *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

1 John 5:13-21

In what way was Jesus “*born of God*”?

- The *traditional* interpretation is to take the aorist tense here as expressing a “timeless relation” between Christ and the Father:

*We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, light from light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.*
(Nicene Creed)

- *Our begetting and our sonship are different from His, which are unique and eternal.* (Stott, p.192)

In what way was Jesus “*born of God*”?

- The renowned Greek scholar, A.T. Robertson, shows there is perhaps a **better** way to understand Christ as having been “*born of God*”, when he points out that Christ uses this same Greek word (*gennao*) to refer to **Himself** in the Gospel of John:
 - **John 18:37b** - *For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world--to bear witness to the truth.*
 - **cf. Hebrews 10:5** - *Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me;*
 - Therefore John’s description of Jesus as “*born of God*”, instead of being a reference to some kind of eternal “*begetting*”, would simply be a reference to His **incarnation**.

John's assurance that Jesus Christ will keep his readers safe from harm that "*the evil one*" (i.e., the devil) would inflict upon them is best understood in the whole context of 1 John, as an assurance that Jesus Christ will keep them from being led astray by the false teachers.

¹³ *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.* ¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* ¹⁵ *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.* ¹⁶ *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.* ¹⁷ *All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.* ¹⁸ *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.* ¹⁹ *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* ²⁰ *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.* ²¹ *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

1 John 5:13-21

Continuing to reassure his readers, John, using the *second* of his “*we know*” expressions in 5:19, contrasts their position as **believers** with that of the rest of the “*world*” (fallen humanity).

¹³ *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.* ¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* ¹⁵ *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.* ¹⁶ *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.* ¹⁷ *All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.* ¹⁸ *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.* ¹⁹ *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* ²⁰ *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.* ²¹ *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

1 John 5:13-21

The third affirmation [“*we know*”] is the most fundamental of the three. It undermines the whole structure of the false teacher’s theology. It concerns the Son of God through whom alone we can be rescued from the evil one and delivered from the world.

¹³ *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.* ¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* ¹⁵ *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.* ¹⁶ *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.* ¹⁷ *All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.* ¹⁸ *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.* ¹⁹ *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* ²⁰ *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.* ²¹ *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

1 John 5:13-21

Two elements of the work of the Son of God are alluded to here:

- His coming as the historical Jesus
- His giving understanding to people when they became believers.

¹³ *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.* ¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* ¹⁵ *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.* ¹⁶ *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.* ¹⁷ *All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.* ¹⁸ *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.* ¹⁹ *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* ²⁰ *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.* ²¹ *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

1 John 5:13-21

The understanding which the Son of God gives is knowledge of God the Father himself. That John refers to the *Father* when he uses the expression “*him who is true*” is made clear in the next phrase: *and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ.*

¹³ *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.* ¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* ¹⁵ *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.* ¹⁶ *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.* ¹⁷ *All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.* ¹⁸ *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.* ¹⁹ *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* ²⁰ *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. ²¹ *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

Not only do we “**know Him**”; we are also “**in Him**”. Unlike the lost people of this world, who are “**in the evil one**”, we are **in God**, sharing His very life, having derived our spiritual being from Him. Moreover we are “**in His Son Jesus Christ**.

¹³ *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.* ¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* ¹⁵ *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.* ¹⁶ *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.* ¹⁷ *All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.* ¹⁸ *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.* ¹⁹ *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* ²⁰ *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.* ²¹ *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

1 John 5:13-21

1 John 5:20b - *He is the true God and eternal life.*

Who does “*He*” refer to: **Jesus** or the **Father**?

¹³ *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.* ¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* ¹⁵ *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.* ¹⁶ *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.* ¹⁷ *All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.* ¹⁸ *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.* ¹⁹ *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* ²⁰ *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.*** ²¹ *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

1 John 5:13-21

1 John 5:20 - *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.***

Who does “*He*” refer to: **Jesus** or the **Father**?

- I believe that “He” refers to Jesus for the following reasons:
 - Grammatically speaking, “He” would normally refer to the nearest preceding subject, namely His Son Jesus Christ
 - To understand “He” as referring to the Father makes John redundant. He has already referred to the Father as “Him who is true” twice in the first part of the verse. Why would John then turn around and tell us that He is “the true God”?
 - It seems to be John's intention to begin and end both the Gospel of John (1:1; 20:28) and 1 John (1:1 and 5:20) with an assertion of the deity of Christ.
 - Jesus is called the life, both in the Gospel of John (11:25; 14:6) and in 1 John (1:2; 5:12).
 - John seems concerned to establish Jesus' deity in opposition to the false teachers throughout this letter. It only makes sense, that John would want to end on this note.

The worship of idols, unreal and dead, is inconsistent and incompatible with that knowledge of the true God, which is eternal life. All God-substitutes are idols and the Christian must vigilantly guard himself from them.

¹³ *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.* ¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* ¹⁵ *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.* ¹⁶ *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.* ¹⁷ *All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.* ¹⁸ *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.* ¹⁹ *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* ²⁰ *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.*** ²¹ ***Little children, keep yourselves from idols.***

1 John 5:13-21

The charge, '*keep yourselves from idols*', arises naturally from the condition and character of the true Christian which John has discussed throughout the letter. The Son of God will keep him (5:18), but this does not relieve the Christian of the responsibility to keep himself.

¹³ *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.* ¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* ¹⁵ *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.* ¹⁶ *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.* ¹⁷ *All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.* ¹⁸ *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.* ¹⁹ *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* ²⁰ *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.* ²¹ *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

Paraphrastic Commentary on 1 John 5:3b-21

- ▶ (13) I am sending this letter to you - you who are trusting in the person of God's Son - so that you may have assurance that you possess life that is both abundant and unending. (14) And this is the kind of bold confidence we have when we come to Him in prayer: we are sure that, if we are careful to ask for what is in keeping with what He has ordained for us as believers, He will listen favorably to our request. (15) And if we are sure of that, we are likewise sure that what we have requested is already ours. (16) To illustrate - suppose a Christian brother is involved in a sinful practice that does not lead him to eternal destruction. If you pray for such a person, you can be sure that God will restore him to spiritual life. There is sin that (because of its persistent and adamant rejection of God's incarnate Son - the kind of attitude that characterizes the Gnostics) will lead to eternal death. Concerning prayer for that kind of sin I cannot give any assurance that God will answer. (17) All wrong doing is serious - it is nothing less than sin. Nevertheless, some kinds of sin do not lead a person to eternal destruction.
- ▶ (18) We are sure that no child of God lives a life of habitual sin; on the contrary, God's Son keeps protecting him so that the devil does not lay hold on him. (19) We are sure that we are members of God's family; on the other hand, we know that the people of this sinful world are under the domination of Satan. (20) Again we are sure that God's Son has become the God-man and has given us the spiritual capacity necessary to come to know God. And we are involved in a close spiritual union with the true God and with His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus is the true God and in and of Himself He is the essence and the source of eternal life. (21) Dear children, make sure that you guard yourselves from all representations of false gods.

מָסֶף מִרְאֵל The Letter to the

דָּס תְּלִי גִּנְזִירִי רְהִמִּים נֶצֶח

Hebrews

מְאַנְשָׁי מִנְמָה דָא מִנְתָּה אַקְלָא
צְמַאַלְלָה נְתַאַתְצָרָה דְּרַחְסָנָה סְקָה
אַחֲ פְּקָלָא תְּסִנְ סְרַבָּאַל
רְרָהָא סְקָה תְּאַקְסָנֶצֶת דְּמַמְצָעָה
תְּאַתְּפָלָשָׁה נְתַרְדָּנָה הַרְפָּרָה נְרַלְדָּה
תְּאַגְּשָׁה רַלְדָּה מְלַלְצָה סְסָה תְּלָשָׁה



Class Discussion Time



*Class Discussion Time

- Did my explanation of how God will favorably answer anything we ask for if we ask “according to his will” make sense to you and are you satisfied this is what John is saying here?
- Did my explanation of the “sin leading to death” make sense?
- As we have now concluded our study of 1 John, what are some of the things that you have found most beneficial and/or encouraging as we have examined this book together?
- Do you feel confident in your understanding of this sometimes cryptically worded book? And if so, was this study helpful in giving you that confidence?
- Do you have any critiques of the way I have presented this material – anything that you think would have improved your understanding or given you greater encouragement?