

Sermon Handout

Prayer and Sin

I John 5:16-21

I. Key Questions in the Text

- a. Who is the “brother” in v. 16?
 - i. John’s Gospel (14x)
 1. 12x = literal brother (Ch. 1, 2, 6, 7, 11)
 2. 2x = the disciples 20:17; 21:23 *cf.* Mt 12:50; Act 1:15*f*; 9:30
 - ii. III John 3x = Christians vv. 3, 5, 10 (*contra* “strangers” in v. 5)
 - iii. I John (17x)
 1. 3x = literal brother (2x in v. 12 and by implication v. 10)
 2. 13x = Christians 2:7-11; 3:13-17; 4:20-21
 3. Consistency demands “Christian” in 5:16
- b. What is a “sin unto death?” vv. 16-17
 - i. Not “a” particular sin, but “sinning sin toward” spiritual death
 - ii. John has in mind “antichrist;” *see* 2:18-26; 4:3-6
 - iii. Jesus’ prayers reflect this; *see* Jn 17:9 *cf.* I Jn 4:5

II. John’s Prayer Instructions vv. 14-16

- a. Specifics in praying for fellow Christians
 - i. “If anyone sees” = actual observation, not speculation
 - ii. “sinning sin” not tending toward death *cf.* v. 17
 - iii. “**Brothers**” who are **not** sinning sin toward death v. 16a
 - iv. All wrongdoing is sin v. 17, but forgiven 2:12; *see esp.* 1:9
- b. Such prayers are in keeping with God’s will v. 14
 - i. For those not rejecting the faith, but “sinning sins” v. 16a
 - ii. Ask that God deliver him into life
 - iii. You ask, God will give life v. 16b *cf.* Jas 5:16-20
 - iv. This is our confidence *cf.* v. 14; Jn 16:23-27
- c. John does not **forbid** praying for the apostates v. 16c

III. Final Assurances from the Apostle vv. 18-21

- a. “We know” – God delivers us from sin v. 18
- b. “We know” – We are of God, separated from the world of unbelief v. 19
- c. “We know” – That Jesus brought us truth & we are in him v. 20
- d. Finally, we are to “guard” ourselves v. 21 as Jesus “keeps” us v. 18
Do not, like the “antichrists” of Ch 2, 4, fall for a substitute Christ.