

NOTES:

EPISTLE OF FIRST JOHN

"Sin Unto Death"  
1 John 5:13-17

Introduction

1. John has laboured the points of love, eternal life, righteousness, and knowledge. He is thorough in all that he has written.

2. Drawing to a close now in his letter, the beloved apostle writes about prayer--the blessed privilege of the true children of the Lord. To him, this item of prayer is interrelated with many facets of spiritual truth. Consider, then, the statements which he makes about four huge thoughts:-

1. ETERNAL LIFE--Predicated. V. 13.

Looking back over the whole book, albeit particularly to the immediately preceding verses, John notes that what he has written is for the sake of knowledge! What a glory to know that eternal life is predicated of the one who believes on Christ. Blessed be His Name forever and ever.

The unity of the Gospel and Epistle of John is seen by a comparison of John 20:31 with this present text. The former notes how to get life; the latter the joy in owning it. This is the import of 1 John 1:4--there is JOY in possessing eternal life. Hallelujah.

2. BOLDNESS--Possessed. v. 14.

Four times in this epistle John speaks of this wonderful word--boldness. Twice it is in connection with His coming again (2:28; 4:17) and twice in relation to prayer (3:21,22; here).

The word "boldness" notes the idea of freedom of speech, openness, frankness. What a glorious

approach to Him! How unlike the heathen gods who are approached in fear.

3. PRAYER--Practised. vv. 14-17

Prayer is the very breath of the true child of God. It is God's ordained manner of sharing one's needs with the heavenly Father. Consider some of the important aspects of this item:

a. According to His will. v. 14.

Here is a gracious limitation to prayer. His will is always for our good, hence only ignorantly do we ask for things which are not for our good and thus they are denied. Cf. 2 Cor. 12:9; Prov. 10:24.

Submission to the will of God--that which is for our best interests--is a cardinal aspect of the Christian walk. Let us not argue with it, but delight in the perfect will of an infinite God!

b. According to His hearing. vv. 15, 16.

This is an interesting thought. Praying according to His will, the Lord hears us. His hearing assures that our trust is not misplaced. The petitions are granted at once; the results are often perceived in the future (cf. Mark 11:24).

c. According to His knowledge. vv. 16, 17.

It is important that intercessory prayer be made in the full commitment of one's heart to the knowledge of God. There is a certain direction not to be missed. The sin unto death is not identified. Some sins are known not to be sins unto death. Intercession is not forbidden

for extreme cases, but it is not commanded. It is clear, however, that there is no criterion by which one may distinguish deadly and not deadly sin. This condemns and does not sanction those who tabulate sins under the heads of "mortal" and "venial" sins. The whole point to the passage is that there is a sin not unto death--pray for this. Since both act and motive are involved in the sin unto death, leave its obvious situation with the Lord. A case in point would be that of King Saul.

4. RIGHTEOUSNESS--Promoted. v. 17.

Eternal life, boldness, and prayer are never to be disassociated with the truth of righteous living. Hence, John brings this important item into the discussion. Here is a warning against carelessness. Here is a wide field for brotherly intercession. Oh, for godly living in these days of moral debauchery. Let no one be so senseless as to lay claim to eternal life, boldness, and prayer privileges and ignore the weighty matter of righteousness. The aim of godliness is a mark of true faith.

Conclusion

It is imperative that one see truth in balance. It is a standing pity that too often the imbalance of truth has led to calculations entirely foreign to the Word and to the Lord. Surely, this is one of the major points John is making in these verses of the text: maintain proper balance with the truth of God. Eternal life must be matched with righteousness. Boldness with prayer. Are you a true believer? Is your heart exercised about these matters? We trust so!