

Will God Give Me Life? (1 John 5:16)

Tim Conway | *illbehonest.com*

Question: This one comes from Vlad. That sounds Russian or Romanian. "If I have sinned, and sin brings death (James 1:15), how can I have life and fellowship with God again? I've committed a sin and realize I no longer have the same relationship I had. Although I was pressed by God to repent, and did so. Can you say something about 1 John 5:16, 'God will give him life,' because that is what I'm looking for. I have read somewhere that the relationship is not broken, but fellowship can be broken. Is it biblical to say so?"

Discussion: Ok. Somebody read James 1:15. Let's get a feel for where he's struggling. Somebody read James 1:15. "And desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death." Ok, so he sees desire, sin, death. But it doesn't just say if there's desire and it results in a sin, that there's death. It says sin does something. What does it say happens to sin? When sin what? Is fully grown. Now that's not to say that the wage of a single sin isn't death. But when he talks about sin fully grown, it's like there's this growth. Now he's describing desire. What's behind sin? There's desire that fuels our sin. And then sin, when it's full grown, then there's death. More like a picture of the life of the unbeliever. You have this desire that percolates and results in sin, and the sin grows, kind of like the sin of the Amorites. It's not yet full. It grows. Our sin grows. It multiplies. And you get to this place where you're like Christian in Pilgrim's Progress where you've got this huge pack on your back. It's like God lets it grow to a certain place and then it just explodes in death. But the very fact that James walks us all the way through; there's no life - it just goes to death. That would seem to indicate the growth of lust and sin resulting in death in the life of an unbeliever. It's basically just lost man.

Now he also mentions 1 John. Let's go over there. 1 John 5:16 Somebody read 1 John 5:16. Brethren, I'll tell you this, sometimes the most difficult verses to understand can really be helpful in shedding light on some things when properly understood. Sometimes difficult verses can be the foundation for horrible error. Sometimes they can be really helpful in helping us to see things the way they really are. Somebody read 1 John 5:16.

(from the room) "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."

Tim: Read it again.

(from the room) "If anyone sees his brother committing..."

Tim: Ok, stop. Who's he writing to? Who is 1 John written to? Who said believers? Prove it. Prove it's written to believers.

(from the room) "My little children..."

Tim: My little children - where does it say that?

(from the room) 1 John 2:1

Tim: Quote 1 John 5:13

(from the room) "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God."

Tim: I write these things to you who believe. Ok, go back to 5:16. "If anyone sees his brother committing a sin..." Ok, who is he speaking to now? He's speaking to those who believe. And if they see who? His brother. What's the implication there? Is he speaking about seeing a lost man? Now, see, I would say James was speaking about a lost man. Now, he may be speaking about what would happen to any one of us if we weren't plucked from that. But basically, the end is death. The end for the Christian isn't death. The end for the Christian is life. But if we go here, the idea is that if anybody sees a brother who's sinning a sin that is not unto death. Well, if they're truly a brother, if they're truly a brother... Now I recognize sometimes Scripture speaks about what people claim to be, not what they really are. And Scripture is charitable and will regard people according to what they claim to be. Scripture can speak about the righteous. Jesus talked about He didn't come to call the righteous. Scripture calls them what they claim to be, not what they really are.

But here, a brother. You see a brother who commits a sin not unto death. Well, anybody that's truly a brother, truly a Christian, can only commit sins that aren't unto death. But in light of the context of 1 John, what would be a sin that leads unto death? The feel is - what he's talking about is you've got these antichrists. They went out from us, because they weren't of us. See, they continue in sin. They practice sin. And the idea is, if you go out after having had this light, and you go on practicing sin, that's a sin unto death. You see, the idea here is, he's talking to them about something he expects them to recognize from his epistle what he's talking about, when he talks about a sin that leads unto death, when he talks about a sin that doesn't lead unto death. If you go through the whole letter, he's talking about Christians... "I write to you, little children, that you don't sin. But if you do sin, we have an Advocate with the Father - Jesus Christ the Righteous." You know that is a sin that doesn't lead unto death. Why? Because, "my little children." And we have an Advocate. So that doesn't lead to death. Whereas those who professed to be Christians at one point, but denied Jesus Christ - to deny Jesus Christ doesn't mean you say Jesus doesn't exist. It means you deny something about Him. They continued in this sin. They went out from among the Christians because they weren't really of the Christians. They continued in unrighteousness.

He's saying, look, I say to you, you pray for those brothers - those who are faithful, those who have stuck by the Christians, those who show that they have a love for the brethren; those who keep the commandments of Jesus Christ as a rule; those who are following Him. Those who are

not given to worldliness. Those who have not gone out from us, because they are of us. When they sin, you pray for it. You pray for that kind of sin, because that's a sin that doesn't lead to death. Whereas these people that continue in sin, these people that deny Jesus Christ - you deny the Son, you deny the Father. Those people that deny. Those heretics. Those people that are redesigning and redefining Jesus Christ. I'm not saying to pray for them.

But here's what he's asking about, and here's what's really interesting. If you pray for a brother who has committed a sin not unto death. What happens? God will give him life. What happened? Did he lose life? Did he lose his life when he sinned? What do you mean God will give him life? I thought when we first believed upon the Lord Jesus Christ, we have eternal life. I thought that Jesus said that him who comes to Me, I will not cast out. Has he been cast out? Didn't Jesus say eternal life? No one will pluck them. Isn't that what we're told? Can it be eternal life if a brother who commits a sin that's not unto death...? Well, wait. He's a brother and he commits a sin that's not unto death. Where does life even come in? Life. Doesn't he already have life? Did it get taken away? Did he lose his life? You know, I think what it helps us to do is really think about the nature of life. We are so, I would say, earthly minded when it comes to life and death. Because we tend to see people who are moving, living... In our eyes, even though we don't regard things according to the flesh any longer, yet we do see through physical eyes. We've been to funerals. We look in the casket. We see death. Oh, that's death. They're dead. There's no pulse. Well, they're dead. And I recognize when we come to Scripture, we can talk more about spiritual life and spiritual death. But, do you remember how John defines life? Anybody remember how he defines it? John 17:3 What is it to have life?

(from the room) "This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the one true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."

Tim: It's to know God. That's the issue. It's to know God. Life is to know God. It's to know Christ. Now look, knowing in Scripture is intimate. It isn't just knowing facts. To know. The word is used in really interesting ways. When Mary gave birth to Jesus, Joseph had not yet known her. There's sexual intimacy actually behind that word. To know. Life - you have to understand what Jesus is saying when He says that they will have life more abundantly. It's like we heard on Sunday. It's to embrace the glory of God. It's to see the face of God. To know God is to have intimacy with Him. It's to embrace Him. Yes, there's a knowledge that has to do with it. But when we talk life, when we talk death. At the deepest level, that's what we're talking about.

Now think about this. If I am supposed to pray for a brother who commits a sin that's not unto death, which means he has life, and he's never going to see death. He's not going to go to hell. He's not going to perish. What do you mean I pray for him and God's going to give him life? He already has life. Yeah, but remember this. He's committed a sin. No, the sin doesn't lead to death. But what does that seem to communicate that if I pray for a brother or sister who sinned, what does that seem to communicate? That God will give them life? When you think about life as John defines it. What does it seem to mean? I don't think John wants us to think oh, they lost their life - now they get it back. They're in - they're out. They're in - they're out. If you sin, you're

out. If you get somebody to pray for you, you're back in again. In and out; in and out; in and out... That's not eternal life. Because that's not eternal. That's temporary life. That's back and forth life. That's I'm alive, I'm dead, I'm alive, I'm dead. That's not eternal life. For one thing, I think this. The Bible uses "life" in different ways in different places. And I don't think we want to take it here to mean obviously, it doesn't mean physical life. It doesn't mean if you sin, you die physically. And then God will raise you back up.

Certainly it doesn't mean that. And it doesn't mean being saved all over again, because the guy's already a brother. It seems to indicate, like he says, it seems to indicate fellowship. Now you think with me here. Go back to 1 John 1. Somebody just begin reading 1 John 1:1. Just read until we get tired. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and we have touched with our hands concerning the Word of Life. The life was made manifest and we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us. That which we have seen and heard, we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us. And indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete." Right. Fellowship. Our fellowship.

Brethren, I'm going to take my best stab at this. But I think what John means is that sin interrupts not life altogether, but if life is knowing God... Listen, Scripture's serious when it says don't grieve the Holy Spirit. Sin interrupts your life. Sin interrupts your knowing God. Just even at that level, Adam knew Eve and she conceived. At that level, if I sin against my wife, it interrupts that life on that level. If life is to know God and to know Christ, sin interrupts. It seems like the issue here is this: that if we pray for one another - brethren, I'll tell you this is big. I really think this is big. For one thing, it really helps us feel the reality of what life is all about. It really helps us feel the reality of how sin interrupts life. It really helps us feel how important it is to pray for other Christians that you see falling into sin. Because you think about the promise here. Life will be restored to them. The fellowship will be brought back. The sweetness will be brought back. The intimacy, the closeness. Sin interrupts our fellowship with God. We lose something. We lose a sight of the glory. We lose the face of God. He hides. That's a reality. And that's one of the greatest pains of sin.

Look, for the Christian, it's not just the consequences of getting caught in my sin. A lot of times, brethren, the grief of the Christian behind sin is how it's going to affect my fellowship with the Lord. That's the heart of the true Christian. Brethren, a text like this, just think about what it says about how terrible sin is. How awful. It brings a death of sorts. Because what? It removes the smile of God.

Brethren, I'll tell you this, when you read in Scripture about eternal death, you need to recognize what we're talking about. What makes death death is not the fire or the worm that never dies, or the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. It is that you are so separated from God - that's what outer darkness means. God is light. To be in the outer darkness means you are away from His

smile. Oh, you're in the presence of the Lamb and of His angels - no question. Scripture says that. You are horrifyingly in the presence of the Lamb. But there's no smile. There's no intimacy. There's no fellowship. That's death. That's what this says to us. And so I would say yes to Vlad, that that is right. That this has to do with relationship. This has to do with fellowship as stated in 1 John 5:16. That seems to be the only thing that you can possibly make sense out of this text as far as its meaning, and in the context of 1 John, I think, that it makes sense. It seems to be consistent with that context. Otherwise, I'm afraid you end up with some sort of doctrine you don't want to end up with.

Anybody else have any comments about that or observations? But like I said before, undoubtedly a hard to understand text can result in all manner of error. But sometimes, the hard to understand verses can really be useful in helping us to understand... brethren, the horrible, foul, ugly thing that sin is and what it does to the smile of God in your life. What the real idea behind death is all about. And how critical that we pray for one another when we see other Christians falling into sin. Brethren, you see anything about me that seems less than Christlike, please pray for me. And I'm serious, because I know you do see that. We see those things in one another. I beg you, pray for me when you see them.

(from the room) Can we rebuke you?

Tim: You can rebuke me too, but if you're going to rebuke me, promise to pray for me. I'll let you rebuke me, if you pray for me. I'll let you rebuke me otherwise...

Ok, brethren, let's pray. Father, we thank You for Your Word. Lord, we want our fellowship with You to be unhindered, unclouded; Oh, we want the smile of God upon our life. Lord, drive sin away from us. Lord, put a hatred within each one of us for it. May we detest it as the most detestable thing imaginable. Anything that would bring a cloud between You and us, Oh, what fools we are! To choose sin over You. Foolish. Deceived. Blind when we do that. How wretched that we would ever choose that which would mar our fellowship with You. Oh, Lord, we want to be wise. We want life more abundantly. Lord, give us the fullness of that life. Burden us, Lord, to pray for one another all the more. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.