



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | [believerschapeldallas.org](http://believerschapeldallas.org)

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Numbers 14: 11-35

“Israel at Kadesh-Barnea, part III”

TRANSCRIPT

Tonight we are turning again to Numbers chapter 13 and chapter 14 and specifically tonight to chapter 14 verse 11 through verse 45 and we will be considering again Israel at Kadesh-Barnea. This is the final of our studies of Israel at the critical time.

Remember when the children of Israel came out of Egypt after a relatively short time, they found themselves right at the border of the land and ready to enter into the land they decided that they would send in spies to spy out the land which the Lord has already told them was the land flowing with milk and honey. So they sent the spies in and the spies came back and they all gave a similar report, the land was just as the Lord had said, it was a land flowing with milk and honey, and nevertheless, in spite of the fact that the Lord had given them the promise that he would be with them that the land, was a land flowing with milk and honey.

And the spies had searched it out and found it to be exactly as the Lord had said it would be. Ten of the spies said that they didn't think that the children of Israel should go in because they were people who were stronger than the Israelites. They had the giants there, the children of Anak were there, and furthermore the land was a land that ate up the inhabitants thereof, and in light of the giants and the strong men, they felt certain that they would be unable to take that land.

Caleb stilled the people, however, and said, let's go up at once and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it. So there was a division among the men. They did agree that the evaluation of the land was identical, it was good, but they disagreed over whether they should go in. In fact, the Lord later on says, how long will it be before they believe me? So the attitude of some was the attitude of unbelief, the attitude of the two was the attitude of belief.

I can imagine the criticism arising at this point directed toward Caleb particularly who seemed very outspoken, "You are breaking the unity of the appraisal commission by giving different view points from the majority offers and therefore you shouldn't do that. You are causing division." This incidence of course reveals a lot of general truth such as might is not always right. The majority are not always right. In fact, it illustrates also the reverse truth that when the Lord is with someone it doesn't really make any difference, what difference, what the numbers are on either side because ultimately it is the question of the power of God as over against the power of men.

This is a great biblical illustration of many important truths and I mentioned in the first study particularly some of them. For example, this passage may be applied to the Nation Israel in the present age because what we find today is the same situation. The Nation Israel has been scattered to the four corners of the earth because of unbelief and therefore they abide under the discipline of God for that reason.

So Romans 9, 10, and 11 finds illustration right here, and in fact if you remember in Romans 9, 10, and 11, the apostle makes the point particularly in chapter 11 and verse 23, "And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. It refers to the olive tree and points out that the one thing that hinders Israel from the possession of the promises is their attitude towards the Lord God.

There is an application of this incident to individuals also because the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews uses this instance to exhort the readers of his letter with reference to their own faith. In Hebrews chapter 3 verse 7 through chapter 4 verse 13 we have a

section that builds gateway upon this particular experience of the children of Israel and then it also has an application to the individual sanctification of the believer because as I have mentioned in both of these studies previously, the way of sanctification is precisely the same as the way of salvation.

Men are saved by grace through faith. Men are sanctified by grace through faith and in fact when the Bible says that the just shall live by faith, that's not simply a reference to the doctrine of justification, but to the doctrine of sanctification as well. So we find an illustration here of the important principle that we are not saved by grace and then live the Christian life by works, as so many seem to think, but rather our relationship to the Lord God is always one of faith.

Now as a result of the fact that there was a division and as a result of this report that was given by the twelve people, last week we saw that the congregation lifted up their voice and cried and the people wept and they were ready to stone Caleb and Joshua because they wanted to go into the land as we read in the 10th verse, "But the congregation bade stone them with stones and the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel and then in the 11th verse of chapter 14, we read, "The Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? And how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have showed them? So now the Lord is going to respond and is going to respond in a sentence of disciplinary judgment upon them.

Verses 11 and 12 set it forth and verse 12 now we will continue, "I will smite them with pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they." That's very upsetting to Moses and he thinks about a lot of the truths that are dependent upon the faithfulness of God to his promises. I have no doubt in my mind but this was something the Lord God said in order to bring out of the heart of Moses just precisely what is stated. But this was one of the means to the accomplishment of the end, which was the glorification of the truth that God promises to Jacob and the

lovingkindness that he has promised to Abraham, that which we were talking about Monday night in the Lord's Supper when we were talking about the fact that God has promised to give truth to Jacob and loving kindness to Abraham.

And the way in which the Lord accomplishes his purposes, his sovereign purposes is through prayer, through witnessing, and also through admonition. And so he has warned now and in fact has announced what he is going to do, and Moses now by the Spirit of God said to the Lord,

"Then the Egyptians shall hear it (for Thou broughtest up this people in Thy might from among them) And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that Thou Lord art among this people, that Thou Lord art seen face to face, and that Thy cloud standeth over them, and that Thou goest before them, by day in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if Thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of Thee will speak, saying, because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he swear unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness. And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as Thou hast spoken, saying." He reminds the Lord of one of his promises.

That's not a bad way to pray you know. Get down on your knees and remind the Lord of what he said in his word. It is a good illustration. The prophets and others do precisely that. So he reminds the Lord of some of those promises and one of the greatest of the promises that the Lord had given was this promise, which he now speaks about in verse 18. The Lord is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations. "Pardon, I beseech Thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of Thy mercy, and as Thou hast forgiven this

people, from Egypt even until now." So Moses urges the Lord to remember what the Egyptians and others will think.

They will think he was unable to bring them into the land because they have heard about those promises, they have heard about how the Lord delivered them through the Red Sea, but if he doesn't get them into the land, and they turn around and go back, it's obvious they are going to say, "Yahweh was not able to do what they said that he would do." So in a sense Moses says remember your promises, remember your faithfulness to your promises, remember your lovingkindness, remember that you are a God who forgives and you are a God who cannot be frustrated and therefore pardon this particular people and forgive them that your promises may be carried out and so now in verse 20 we read, "And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word." And then there follows the pronouncement of physical judgment.

I am going to read through this section and I want you to know notice particularly what the Lord says that he is going to do. And this begins with verse 21 through verse 39 not through the end of the chapter,

"But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: But my servant Caleb because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land where into he went; and his seed shall possess it. (Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwelt in the valley.) Tomorrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea. And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. Say unto them, As truly as I live,

saith the Lord as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward which have murmured against me, doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey (You remember what they said, they said we better not go in there because the giants are there, the children of Anak are there, and they are stronger than we are and furthermore our children might get hurt. A very, very appealing kind of thing. You might think of this real good sense and now the Lord lays a special stress upon that. He says) but your little ones which ye said should be a prey (as if the Lord cannot take care of the little ones when they went in such faithlessness. They not only do not have faith that God is able to bring them into the land but they don't even believe he can take care of the little children. So he makes a special point of it.) Your little ones which ye said should be a prey, then will I bring in and they shall know the land which ye had despised; but as for you your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness and your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years and bear your whoredoms until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness."

Now this is the God of lovingkindness. So you see the God of love is a God of holy love. There is another aspect of the character of God that we must harmonize with these magnificent promises of his loving kindness. The goodness of God is not simply the sentimental softness that our generation associates with God. In fact even the language is the kind of language that would be offensive in the ears of modern man.

"After the number of the days in which he searched the land even forty days, each day for a year, shall you bear your iniquities even forty years and you shall know my breach of promise. I the Lord have said it. I will surely do it unto all this evil

congregation that are gathered together against me in this wilderness. They shall be consumed and there they shall die and the men which Moses sent to search the land who returned and made all the congregation to murmur against him by bringing up a slander upon the land even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land died by the plague before the Lord. But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh which were of the men that went to search the land lived still and Moses told these things unto all the children of Israel and the people mourned greatly."

Now if you look at this, you will notice the way in which the Lord speaks here. He says, they shall not see the land, their carcasses shall fall in the wilderness, one day one year, they spent forty days searching the land, they are to spend forty years wandering in the wilderness, one year for each day they went in, they shall die, and then Moses adds they died by the plague and Caleb and Joshua lived still, why? Flagrant immorality, adultery, uncleanness, lasciviousness? No, unbelief. That's all. Unbelief. God wants to be believed. That's the fundamental nature of sin. There are different kinds of explanations of what sin is. Rebellion, selfishness, etc, wanting to be autonomous, wanting to be God or a little god; all of those are the expressions of the fundamental attitude of unbelief. Unbelief leads to rebellion which in turn leads to immorality. So, that is the pattern of Scripture, unbelief is the essential nature of sin.

It's not something minor with the Lord God when a person does not believe him anymore than if a person does not believe you when you speak the truth to them. That's really a slander on your character. It is an insult to you and when a person says, I don't believe you, that's an offence. Well, even if human beings think of it as an offense, what about the Lord God who never spoke any lie. I have spoken a lie and perhaps some of you have too. So, with us it cannot be the same offense with a God of whom the Scriptures say more than once he does not lie. So to lie for God is impossible. But when

a person does not believe him, what does he say? He is not telling the truth. That is very important with the Lord God.

Now you might think that in a situation like this if they went out now and did what they were supposed to do in the first place, that would wipe the slate clean. No, that forgets, overlooks the fact that there is such a thing as presumption. God has now spoken and so the presumption of the people is set out in verse 40 through verse 45, and listen, They rose up early in the morning and get them up into the top of the mountain saying, Lo, we be here, and we will go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised: for we have sinned. And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the Lord? But it shall not prosper. Why this is said? Because he has told them to go back now and go back in the wilderness. So they want to disobey him again.

They want to do what they should have done but at the wrong time. Go not up, for the Lord is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the Lord, therefore the Lord will not be with you. But they presumed to go up unto the hill top: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and Moses, departed not out of the camp. I don't know why Moses didn't accept just simple faith in the word of the Lord, but it was a good thing that he didn't, because we read in verse 45, Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, or defeated them, even unto Hormah.

So, as we relate back over this little incident right here from verse 40 through verse 45, you can see what we now have is not failure to do the will of God when it is expressed. Well, really it's the same thing except it is different with reference to the land in the first place. God wanted them to go into the land, they didn't go, they turned beside, now he says don't go into the land, go back into the wilderness, but they want to go in, and then they also say in the 40th verse, We have sinned. Now it is obvious that that meaning, we have sinned, is not a true confession of sin and guilt that arises from the



heart. Does it seem harsh? Does it seem harsh to say after all they said we have sinned? So shall we not take them at the word?

Well, in the light of this situation since the Lord had said, don't go now, for them to say we have sinned and go it is obvious, it is not a real confession of sin. Now we do have instances like this in the Bible. Well, yes we have already had some. We have Pharaoh saying, I have sinned but he didn't really believe in sin. We have later on Judas talking about his sin too. It's not uncommon for people to say, "I have sinned," but not to really mean I have sinned. And so the "we have sinned" here is the sin of regret, not repentance. It is the same kind of sin that Judas had when he said, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." And it was not that Judas had come to understand what had really transpired, and when he went out and committed suicide, he committed a further act of rebellion against the Lord God. Regret is all the world different from repentance. In Judas' case, what he regretted was what was happening to him as a result of his sin. And I have no doubt in my own mind that that was what the way in which we have to understand this.

When they said, we have sinned, it has now come to them that the effects of their action are not good. They are going to spend 40 years in the wilderness, one year for everyday, and furthermore they are never going to see that land. No wonder they are regretting that now after they have been sentenced to 40 years in the wilderness, and so in order to overcome this, they say, we have sinned, we are going to go up and go on into the land as the Lord wanted us to go.

There is a right time and a wrong time for even right things. Let me say that again because it might slip by. There is a right time and a wrong time for right things. Now it is perfectly alright for them to go in the land in fact that was the right thing to do. There was a right time however to go in the land and there was a wrong time to go in the land.

Now you can make simple illustration of this. It is perfectly alright to play a saxophone, and there is a right time to play a saxophone, play it in the afternoon, play it

in the morning, but don't play it in the early morning, and don't play it at 11 o'clock or 12 o'clock at night in the apartment house where there are 15 or 20 other families that might hear it. Nothing wrong in playing a saxophone, but there is a wrong time to play it. So the presumption of the people here brings one of the great illustrations of what the Bible speaks about a sin unto death.

Now, I am not going to pass judgment on the eternal destiny of these individuals who were the generation came out of the land of Egypt. I would be inclined to think that they probably were believing individuals that is fundamentally believing individuals that is as a nation they are illustrative of those who come out of the bondage of Egypt come into the land and the work of sanctification begins. So we will just assume that that is what they are designed to represent because remember Paul says, that these things happened by way of in samples but it seems clear that what they did commit was a sin that was what we would call sin unto physical death. As a result of their sin of unbelief, they died in the wilderness.

Now, there were some individuals who no doubt were illustrations of faithful men. We don't really think do we that there were only two believers and all of the whole group of children of Israel that came out of the land of Egypt, Caleb and Joshua, there were few people who would adhere to that. There was Aaron, there were others, who were men of faith, but at this critical point, they failed and came unto the judgment.

Now we have a passage in the New Testament that I would like to ask you to turn to because I think that what we have here illustrated is a truth that pertains to us in 1985. It is found in 1 John chapter 5 and it is verse 13 through verse 17. I would like to say, right in the beginning, that this is a difficult passage and as will be evident from the things that I will say, it is possible to use another illustration. But I have chosen this one because it is a difficult one and it is one that we should be acquainted with and one that perhaps we will want to think about. 1 John, chapter 5 verse 13 through verse 17, now notice carefully, what John says here as he draws near the end of this first epistle of his.

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.

Now I am going to read this from the Greek text because it might be that you have aversion that might confuse you just slightly. 1 John chapter 5, verse 13, reads, these things have I written unto you that you may know that you have eternal life, you who believe in the name of the Son of God. So if you will ponder that for a moment you will see that what John is saying is his purpose in writing is that his readers may know who are taken to be believers, you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

So John is simply saying, I have written my epistle not that you may obtain eternal life -- that was his purpose in writing the gospel, he speaks about the fact that he has chosen certain signs that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ and that in believing in him you might have everlasting life -- but here when he writes his epistle he says, that you may know that you have eternal life. So the Gospel of John has one of its primary purposes, possession of eternal life, the entrance into eternal life; the first epistle, the assurance, that we have eternal life. Now evidently this was needed by those to whom John wrote probably because of laxity in their life and fogginess about the doctrine of the security that is ours when we believe in Christ. So he wants them to have the assurance of the possession of eternal life.

Now he goes on to say, And this is the confidence that we have in him, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. So he mentions the fact that one of the ways in which we know that we have life is that our prayers are answered. If you pray and you never have had an answer to your prayers, you might wonder if you really did belong to the Lord. So one of the ways by which we know that we are his is that he hears our petitions. So this is the confidence that we have in him that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us, and if we know that he hear us whatsoever we ask,

we know that we have the petitions that we desire out of him so we know he answers our petitions.

His answers may be different from that which we expect just like a father's answers to a child are different. The child always expects the father, wants the father to give a yes answer, but yeses to me seemed to come few and far between when I was growing up. They were mainly no, no or else they were, I was pushed off and I was not answered at all. It seemed that all of those turned out to be ultimate answers later on. So, we have to remember this doesn't mean that all of your petitions are to have a yes answer. You know enough about the Bible to know that.

Now one question however might arise. Suppose you pray for something and you really feel that God has led you to pray and you don't get the answer that you think you ought to have. Well that may make you think that you are really not one of his. So, he introduces here a statement or so to warn you that there may be an occasion in which you ask for a certain thing and you will not get your answer and it will not be because you do not belong to him, but it will be for other reasons, and so verses 16 and 17 suggests this.

"If any man sees his brother sin a sin, which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is sin unto death. I do not say that he shall ask for information about it. All unrighteousness is sin and there is sin not unto death."

Now you can see that this passage probably has had different kinds of interpretations. So we don't have time in 10 minutes to speak about all of the different ways in which 1 John 5:16 and 17 have been taken. For example, it is possible some have thought that this sin unto death is sin unto eternal death and it has been suggested that that is what John is speaking about. What you have here is evidence of the fact that

it is possible for a person to have spiritual life and then to lose his spiritual life and have spiritual death. Others have taken this as a reference to the sin of apostasy and associated it somewhat with that.

Still others have suggested that this passage points out that there are different degrees of sin such as is found in the Roman Catholic Church and to some extent in the Lutheran Church; that is in some sense that are venial, forgivable and then there are some that are mortal. As a matter of fact the New English Bible seems to take that interpretation and translates this sin unto death as deadly sin suggestive of say mortal sin and in fact the sixteenth article of the Anglican Confession of Faith suggests that as well. It is a carryover from Romanism and Lutheranism, also recognizes different types of sin like that too.

It is possible some have said that this is a reference to the fact that in the Old Testament some sins that were committed with a high hand. In fact in the very next chapter, Numbers chapter 15 and verse 30, we have reference to that. Sins committed *yagamma*, with a high hand so that reference is made to willful sin as over against other kind of sin and willful sin is sin unto death but other types of sin unpremeditated, that type of sin is forgivable sin.

And there are other ways in which it might be taken and as I say, no time to talk about all of that, I simply want to point out that there is such a thing as sin unto death and this passage is one of the passages that points it out, and I suggest to you that the reason that this passage is given is to comfort the people that John was writing to, to let them know that when they prayed for someone and prayed that God would give them life and they died, they shouldn't necessarily assume therefore they are not true believers. In other words, the individual may have sinned sin unto death.

The immediate context of the passage it seems to me makes it very plain, I said very plain, makes it plain, I won't say very plain, because that might seem to suggest I am trying to suggest other interpreters who don't find it as plain as I, don't have eyes to see also. But verse 16 says, If any man see his brother sin which is not unto death, so one

would think that the burden approve rests upon those who think that this is a reference to unbelievers who are called brothers just like a Jewish man may call another Jewish man a brother when there was no real spiritual life. So we will take it as if it is a reference to a spiritual brother.

Now the meaning of the terms then would suggest that what we have endured here is physical life and physical death, because it is impossible in other places, and after all John wrote the gospel which has the strongest language about eternal life, for a believer to have anything other than he turn alive. So verses 16 and 17, then probably have to do with believers. What if you mean when you say if any man see his brother sin a sin, which is not unto death?

Now you might be lead astray by the way in which the Authorized Version renders this, strictly speaking the Greek text says, if any man see his brother sinning sin, not unto death, he shall ask, in the sense of pray, and he will give him life. That is to the ones who sin not to death. There is sin unto death. Now he doesn't say there is a sin, he says simply there is sin unto death, so let's not think about an individual sin. There is sin unto death. Not concerning that do I say, that he should, and a different term is used, it is a term that means often in Johannine literature to ask for information. So I do not say that he should ask for information concerning that. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin, not a sin, there is sin not unto death.

So it seems clear that the apostle is not thinking about a particular sin. He is talking about something else. What he is talking about is indefinite; that is, he doesn't name a particular sin. So the difference is a difference in degree. In other words, it is not the character of the sin, it is not some mortal sin as over against a venial sin, but it is a difference of another kind, not difference of the degree. I suggest it is a difference in continuance in sin. In other words, if a person who continually sins, persistent sin that John is speaking about, and the present tenses suggest that as well.

If any man see his brother sinning sin which is not unto death, he shall ask and he will give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is sin unto death. I do not say that he shall ask for information for it or about it. All unrighteousness is sin and there is sin not unto death. So he is talking it seems to me about willful, continued, persistent sin of any kind. It might be hatred, hatred of another brother. Think of that. It might be murmuring. Just as the children of Israel. It might be infidelity. It might be just plain tightness with your money which belongs to the Lord.

Now since we don't make much of that in Believers Chapel we won't launch into a long dissertation. Well now it is possible to sin, sin unto death, by not handling money under the eyes of the Lord God but it is possible. It might be dishonesty. It might be gluttony. In fact, it can be just almost any kind of sin that Paul characterizes in Galatians 5 as the work of the flesh and persistent sin. It is sin unto physical death.

Think of the illustrations in the Bible. Ananias and Sapphira. They lied about money, they were hypocrites, they brought their money in as if they had sold the property and given it all to the Lord but they kept back some. That probably was one outstanding illustration of the early history of the church to show that when we lie in the local church, when we are dishonest, God sees and judges.

There is the case of the one who sins in 1 Corinthians chapter 5, committing incest, or sin very similar to it, persistent sin. In fact it is described in the present tense in 1 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 1 through verse 5, And so Paul delivered the judgment that he should be handed over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. So it was delivering over of this individual to a system of biblical discipline that leads to physical death.

And think of this, it can happen at the Lord's Supper. So at the Lord's Supper, the Corinthians, they drank wine, they didn't drink grape juice, you don't get drunk on grape juice, but they were drunk at the Lord's table. Instead of sharing, others arrived early, ate their food, when the rest of the saints came, they said, well, we've already eaten. They

brought probably good food, didn't want to eat the food of the poor, and they had drunk a lot of the wine, and so the apostle when he hears about this, he writes them in his little billetdeux in 1 Corinthians in which he talks about the sins of the Corinthians he reminds them in the eleventh chapter. That you don't get away with things like that. That then when you do this at the Lord's table, are you doing it in the presence of the God, who caused that whole generation to die under wilderness.

Listen to what he says, 1 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 29 and verse 30, he says, "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason, many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." It doesn't take much knowledge of the Bible to know that term sleep there is not the sleep of a nap taken in the afternoon; the order, weakness, sickness, the sleep of physical death. That is the pattern of divine discipline, increasing in degree. There is such a thing as sin unto physical death. So Paul says and it is for this very reason that they were disorderly at the Lord's table. Think of it; to be disorderly at the Lord's table leads to physical death if persistent. So in the case of the children of Israel, who did not go into the land they died in the wilderness.

There is a biblical principle that we should not forget. Sometimes we are fit for heaven but not fit for earth. We are fit for heaven because by the grace of God we have been brought to rest ourselves upon what Christ did on the cross for sinners and we have received eternal life, and we are such a reproach to the name of God upon the earth that God takes the lives of the saints to heaven to preserve his name and also to complete his purposes as he intends to complete them. Sometimes we are fit for heaven but not fit for the earth.

Now as far as recognizing what the sin is, some people, I have had people often come to me and years past -- I haven't had anybody recently, I don't know why -- but they will come and say, "Johnson says it is sin unto death." There is a sin unto death. I do not say that he shall pray for it. Well, how can you know not to pray for it if you



don't know what it is? Well, I think it is helpful to notice that that term, I do not say that he shall pray for it, is a term that means in other places in other places in Johannine literature to ask for information.

So in other words if you see a brother sinning sin, you are to pray for them. You should remember that he may die and that should not disturb your assurance of everlasting life if your prayer is answered no. And furthermore you shouldn't ask for information about the particular sin that a brother may have sinned or may have been sinning. That's something that ultimately belongs to the Lord God.

Remember some years ago at American Keswick I was speaking there and a woman came up afterwards and wondered about the sin of a relative. And she wondered if perhaps she had committed sin unto death. Of course, I didn't have any idea whether she had or not and I told her that she was to pray and she wasn't to ask for information about it according to this. I think this is the biblical principle.

I think it is expressed in one other place, and I will just close by reading these words from the Old Testament. Just listen to them carefully. The Psalmist utters these words in Psalm 19. Who can understand his errors, cleanse Thou me from secret faults, keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me, (notice, have dominion over me, he is not talking about one sin, he is talking about the rule of the sins in his life) then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from, (the Hebrew text is very interesting, the Authorized Version says, the great transgression. Hebrew text has simply "great transgression." No particular article. No particular sin, but persistent sin.) Then shall I be innocent, of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer."

And I suggest that is a good prayer for us always to be prayed. May God deliver us from persistent sin. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for these lessons from the Old Testament, truly Lord, these passages do cause us to tremble within as we think of a whole generation committing sin unto physical death. O God, deliver us from great transgression. Cleanse our hearts and lives and minds that we may serve Thee believingly. For Jesus sake. Amen.