

Series: 1 John
Title: Sin unto Death
Text: 1 John 5: 16-17
Date: 4-21-2019
Place: SGBC, NJ

1 John 5: 13: 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, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. 14: And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: 15: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. 16: If any man see 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 a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. 17: All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

This passage, like the whole epistle, is meant to comfort God's saints who believe on Christ. John is declaring the assurance of eternal life we have simply by believing on Christ. John declares the confidence we have in prayer due to Christ our great High Priest

Proposition: Each believer born of God can be so confident in Christ in prayer, that if any of us sees a brother sin and we ask God then God shall give life for him that sins.

What a privilege! God will hear us intercede for our brethren like as Christ intercedes for us. God will grant our sinning brother, life and keep him.

Yet, due to this phrase "*sin unto death*", many believers never get the comfort and assurance that John is giving. John is not saying that one born of God can ever commit the sin unto death. Never! But to ease those troubled by this passage I will preach on this subject. Then maybe God will grant all the ability to get the comfort and assurance out of this passage. Then maybe God will grant all the ability to see what a great blessing God has given us to be able to pray for sick brethren.

Subject: The Sin unto Death

Divisions: 1) What is the sin unto death? 2) What are warnings God gives concerning it? 3) Can a child of God commit the sin unto death? 4) How do we know who to pray for?

WHAT IS THE SIN UNTO DEATH?

1 John 5: 16...There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.

Look at the phrase: "*SIN unto death*"—*from sin* there is only one salvation—Christ Jesus the Son of God. We are fallen, depraved sinners. We need a sacrifice to put away our sins. Christ alone put away the sins of his people by the sacrifice of himself one time.

Hebrews 10: 12: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; 13: From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. 14: For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Hebrews 10:26: [But] if we sin wilfully [denying Christ] after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

“*Sin unto DEATH*”—from death the only salvation is Christ the Life. He said, “*I am the Way, the Truth and the Life: no man cometh to the Father but by me.*” We are guilty and spiritually dead by Adam. God our Father in Christ alone justified his people. Christ only is the righteousness God will receive. Christ only is Life within a sinner. The only way to know we have spiritual life and righteousness in Christ is by believing on his name

John 6:47: Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

1 John 5: 11: And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.
12: He that hath the Son hath life;...

So *the sin unto death* is denying Christ Jesus the Son of God who is the only salvation from sin and death.

1 John 2: 22: Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. 23: Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father:

It is an unpardonable sin to blaspheme and reject our triune God in Christ. There is no pardon for those who reject the only one in whom pardon is found. There is no forgiveness of sin if we reject the only one for whose sake forgiveness is given. Christ said,

Matthew 12: 30: He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. 31: Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy *against* the *Holy* Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. 32: And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the *world* to come.

Some think Christ is saying: “Say what you will about God the Father or God the Son but if you speak against the Holy Spirit you have committed the sin unto death.” Of course that is not what Christ is saying. He is saying, “If you were speaking against me—and I were only a man, only the son of a man, only Joseph’s son—then it would be forgiven you.” But in verse 28, he said, “*But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you*” (Mt 12: 28). He is saying, “You are not speaking against a son of man only. I am the GodMan. I am the Son of God and the Son of Man, the Christ. You are speaking against God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.” Therefore he said, “*Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: ...but the blasphemy against [God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus] shall not be forgiven unto men.*”

In other words, the sin unto death is rejecting Christ who is the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

HOW DO WE KNOW IF SOMEONE HAS COMMITTED THE SIN UNTO DEATH?

1 John 5: 16: If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask,...

It is impossible to know if someone has committed the sin unto death unless they die openly, admittedly denying Christ. But God gives warnings—the things he speaks of are *the sin unto death* if a man continues in them unto the end. I say warnings so that any sinner doing these things *might be warned*. If they are God’s then God will grant them repentance and faith in Christ, bringing them out of these awful errors. This message is not to oppose anyone in these errors. It is to lovingly give you a warning. Hear God’s word and obey it. If we are God’s child, God will make us obey him. This is the life of a believer. This is the very heartbeat of a believer.

One, the sin unto death is to forsake assembling together with God’s saints under the preaching of the gospel.

1 John 2: 18: Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. 19: They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us...

There are some who God gave faith, who beforehand had gotten into situations that make it difficult for them to move to be under the gospel. These are rare cases. This is not someone who is within a day's drive of a church. I have brethren who have a handicapped son who live in another country. Due to insurance, they cannot move. There is no gospel church any closer than a week's drive. So, they listen over the internet. But if or when they get an opportunity to move to a church, they will. We are not talking about those who could move but won't. Nor are we talking about those within a day or two drive from a church where the gospel is preached in truth. Christ's sheep will travel a long ways and sleep over night for green pasture. Even if they can only do so once or twice a month.

Those who "*go out from us*" are those who could assemble. Instead, they absent themselves from where the gospel is preached. They do not move to another church where the gospel is preached in truth. They cease assembling under Christ preaching with Christ's people. They cease committing themselves to Christ and his people. Some go out for the lusts of the world. Others go out uniting with will-worshippers under a false gospel. Others go out using excuses to justify abandoning the gospel.

How is this denying Christ? God has chosen to save his people through the preaching of the gospel of Christ to give Christ all the glory. (1 Cor 1:21) Nothing about the assembling of God's saints in a local church under the preaching of the gospel is of man. It is all of our sovereign Lord Jesus Christ who is the Head of the church through the Holy Spirit of God. (Read Eph 4)

Christ is the Head of his church. He gets all the glory for assembling his people and saving through the preaching of the gospel of Christ. Christ saving through the preaching of the gospel is as glorifying to Christ as his work on the cross whereby he redeemed his people from the curse of the law. Christ provides his pastor preaching the truth which is the fulfillment of prophecy (Jer 3:15) Christ blesses the gospel, adding to the church daily such as should be saved. Christ fitly frames his people together, cementing us together, in the unity of the Spirit. Through the preaching of the truth, Christ himself ministers to each of his children, through the Holy Spirit edifying the body in love.

Someone might justify their rebellion by saying that since Christ works this in his people, Christ simply has not worked it in them or else they would be under the gospel. That is akin to Adam blaming his sin on God for giving him Eve. We must not justify our rebellion by blaming God's sovereignty. If a sinner forever abandons assembling under Christ, together with God's people, under the preaching of the gospel then not only does he prove he does not love the brethren, he also denies Christ, which is to deny the Father, and the Holy Spirit of grace. Hear the word of God. May God help us all to submit and obey his word—this is life or death!

Hebrews 10: 23: Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;) 24: And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

God says hold fast our profession without even wavering. Why? Because God is faithful that promised. There is no sacrifice a believer makes for the sake of assembling with his saints that God will not honor so as to meet his every need. "*God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.*" God says test him to see if it so (Mal 3:10) "*Prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.*" A man cannot obey this word of God if he

is not assembled with God's people on a regular basis. The reason God will have his people assemble together is that we might provoke one another unto love and good works. We do this simply by obeying the next word.

Hebrews 10: 25: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

We exhort one another and provoke one another to love and good works simply by our presence together with God's saints under the preaching of the gospel. Many a day I have been edified by the presence of my brethren in the Lord's house. But if a professing believer sins willfully after he has heard this knowledge of the truth—if he forsakes assembling together with God's saints under the gospel and does so till the end of his life—God says he is apostate.

Hebrews 10: 26: For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, 27: But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. 28: He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: 29: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, WHO HATH TRODDEN UNDER FOOT THE SON OF GOD, AND HATH COUNTED THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT, wherewith he was sanctified, AN UNHOLY THING, AND HATH DONE DESPITE THE SPIRIT OF GRACE 30: For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. 31: *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

Another warning is if a man preaches or assembles to hear a false gospel and does so to the end—**1 John 4: 1: Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits [preachers] whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. 2: Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: 3: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. 4: Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. 5: They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. 6: We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.**

Another warning concerning *the sin unto death* is if he will not heed repeated admonitions to repent and obey Christ—**Titus 3: 10: A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; 11: Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.** Concerning the Pharisee's, Christ told his disciples, "*Let them alone, they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.*" (Mt 15: 14)

So we see the sin unto death is denying Christ by forsaking Christ's assembly, by preaching/believing a false gospel, and by refusal to heed admonitions.

CAN A CHILD OF GOD COMMIT THE SIN UNTO DEATH? NO WAY!

1 John 5: 18: We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

We all sinned and died in Adam. The difference is God chose some in Christ before Adam sinned and he shall not lose one! Christ redeemed us by his blood—justice demands we be saved. His saints are born of

the Spirit of God—whose grace is irresistible. God keeps us by his power and the devil cannot touch us so as to make us fall away—NEVER!

But understand: we may try and even appear to succeed for a while. The apostle Peter denied the Lord three times and went out dead set on going back to his former life as a fisherman. But he was God's. Christ said, "*I've prayed for you that your faith fail not.*" Therefore, it did not fail. But Christ did not allow Peter to remain unassembled. He brought Peter back and assembled him with his people.

Christ, through the Spirit, has anointed his child. He teaches us in the heart. He makes us obey this word. Thus he keeps his child abiding in him unto the end.

1 John 2: 27: But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: [to abide in him] but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

When a sanctified child of God tries to walk contrary to God's word, we cannot find any rest. We are constantly nagged because we know we are disobeying our Lord. He makes that nagging discontent grow until he brings us to ourselves like the prodigal son.

No sacrifice we have to make to abide in Christ under the preaching of the gospel assembled with Christ and his people is too much considering what Christ has borne for his people. When I was a boy we drove three hours round trip to hear the gospel preached. My pastor reminded me often that driving in a comfortable car for a day was not worthy of even speaking about compared to the fury of God's wrath which Christ bore in my room and stead.

And those Christ died for will never commit the sin unto death. By his great sacrifice and suffering unto the death of the cross, Christ has taken away the sins of his people and made us righteous in him.

1 John 3: 5: And ye know that [Christ] was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin...7: Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness [believes and abides in Christ] is righteous, even as he is righteous.

Those born of Christ have a new man within in which we cannot commit sin—including the sin unto death.

1 John 3: 9: Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

Our flesh is only sin. All it does is sin. But in the new man we cannot commit sin. Due to God's grace, Christ's incorruptible seed remains in us and we cannot sin because we are born of God.

John is very clear, speaking by the Holy Spirit of God, that if a professing believer commits the sin unto death it is because they never were of us.

1 John 2: 19: They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us

Notice what God says. If they had been of us, they would have continued with us. We do not say, "Well that professing believer went out, he must be an exception to the rule." No, we let God be true and every man a liar. God says if they had been of us, they would have continued with us because God's incorruptible seed remains in his child and he cannot commit the sin unto death—he cannot apostatize from Christ. God

says the truth is he never was chosen, redeemed or born of God. They went out—"that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

This is the manifest difference which the grace of God has made between the child of God and the child of the devil is that the child of God sinneth not—before God he has no sin, in his new man he has no sin, and God will not allow him to apostatize from Christ, he cannot waver in his profession, he cannot forsake assembling with God's people, he cannot cease loving his brethren—because God is faithful who promised.

1 John 3: 6: Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth [not abiding in Christ] hath not seen him, neither known him...10: In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness [does not believe and abide in Christ] is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

HOW DO I KNOW WHETHER OR NOT TO PRAY FOR SOMEONE?

1 John 5: 16 If any man see 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 a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. 17: All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

Obviously, we are not to pray in general, "*God please save the reprobate.*" Remember, our great High Priest said, "*I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine*" (Jn 17: 9). So we pray for those God elected in Christ. But we do not have to worry about who to pray for because we are only enabled to pray *by the Spirit of God, who makes us pray according to God's will.* (Romans 8)

Everyone is so quick and flippant these days to say, "*I will pray for you.*" That is no different than saying, "*Tomorrow, I will go do such and such.*" You won't pray for anyone if it is not God's will. If the Spirit of God does not enable you to pray then you will not pray for anyone. I say to you, "*Pray for me as the Lord enables you.*"

So if we pray in our flesh, apart from the Spirit, it is *not according to God's will and God will not hear and will not answer, anyway.* And the Spirit of God *does* make it so that we cannot pray for some. Like as the Spirit of God brings brethren to our minds and puts prayer in our hearts, likewise, he can easily keep someone from coming to mind and cause us not to pray for them.

For example: concerning the reprobate in Israel to whom God repeatedly sent the gospel, God spoke in the heart of Jeremiah, saying,

Jeremiah 14: 10: Thus saith the LORD unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the LORD doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins. 11: Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for their good.

The point is we do not have to trouble ourselves with who to pray for because *we can only pray as the Spirit of God enables us to pray according to God's will.*

So when it comes to our brethren we see sin—even those who go out from us—always hold out hope. As *the Spirit enables*, pray for them. And we have this comforting word of assurance—"he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death."

Christ is Life. He gives his redeemed *ETERNAL life.* So as the Spirit enables you, ask God for your brethren when you see them sin. Do not gossip about it—go to God about them. Love does not expose sin, love covers a multitude of sins. Ask God for the brother you see sin. If he be Christ's, Christ shall bring him

to confess his sins and purge him of his sins and turn him back to look only to Christ and to obey God's word. He will bring him back under his gospel with his brethren. He will increase faith in his heart toward Christ and love toward his brethren. This is the confidence we have in Christ at God's throne of grace.

Now, if this passage has troubled you, I hope this helps. If we are born of God, washed in Christ's blood, we shall never commit the sin unto death! This passage has given me great comfort in preparing this message and I know it is great comfort to you who walking in truth. The only ones this message will trouble are those who are not walking in the truth according to God's word. To them let this word be a warning but to you, comfort!

Amen!