"The Sin unto Death"

(I John 5:16-17)

9-1-2019

Introduction:



! WARNING: SIN is Hazardous to your Life!
There is a sin, which, if you partake of it, you may die!

What is this "Sin unto Death?"

I. ***THE "SIN UNTO DEATH"*** **MAY BE <u>COMMITTED BY BELIEVERS</u>**
(by a "brother" - v.16)

II. ***THE "SIN UNTO DEATH"*** **MAY BE <u>SEEN (PERCEIVED) BY OTHERS</u>**
("If any man <u>see</u>…")

III. ***THE "SIN UNTO DEATH"*** **LEADS TO <u>PHYSICAL DEATH</u>**
("there is a sin unto death")

IV. ***THE "SIN UNTO DEATH"*** **MAY BE AN <u>UNREPENTANT WILLFUL HABIT</u>** *("Sin a sin" - lit. "Sinning a sin")*

V. ***THE "SIN UNTO DEATH"*** **IS <u>KNOWN ONLY TO GOD</u>**
("There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for (inquire about) it")

A. ***Since we don't know what the sin unto death is,***
We should <u>not spend time inquiring of God</u> about what it is

B. ***Since we don't know what the sin unto death is,***
We should <u>pray</u> for every sinning brother

C. ***Since we don't know what the sin unto death is,***
We should <u>fear all sin</u> and it's consequences

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Having taught us about how we ought to pray about those matters which are clearly defined Biblical issues (whereupon we can know God's will on the matter), John now teaches us to pray about a certain issue in which we cannot be so sure (as to whether or not it is God's will to answer).

The word "sin" is always associated with "death."

Ge 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou neatest thereof thou shalt surely die.
Ro 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:
Eze 18:4 the soul that sinneth, it shall die.
Eze 18:20 The soul that sinneth, it shall die.
Jas 1:15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.
Re 21:8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.
Ro 5:17 by one man's offence death reigned
Ro 5:21 sin hath reigned unto death
Ro 6:23 For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sin always leads to <u>death</u>.

Sin <u>kills</u>:

--Sin kills <u>relationships</u>
(EX: Adam's with God - Gen. 3)

--Sin kills <u>marriages</u>
("because of the hardness of your hearts" - Mt. 19:8)

--Sin kills <u>churches</u>
("I will…remove thy candlestick" - Rev. 2:5)

--Sin kills <u>disobedient children</u>
("…that you may live long on the earth" - Eph. 6:3)

--Sin kills <u>families</u>
(families of <u>nobility</u> - EX: David's family - II Sam. 12:10-14)
(families with a <u>covetous father</u> - EX: Achan's family - Josh. 7:16-26)

What is sin?

Man calls is an accident,
God calls it abomination.

Man calls it a defect,
God calls it a disease.

Man calls it an error,
God calls it an enmity.

Man calls it a liberty,
God calls it lawlessness.

Man calls it a trifle,
God calls it a tragedy.

Man calls it a mistake,
God calls it a madness.

Man calls it a weakness,
God calls it willfulness.

Moody Monthly
Wake Up Calls, Ron Hutchcraft, Moody, 1990, p.96

Different views as to the meaning of "sin unto death" -

1. A specific sin (as capital offenses under the Mosaic Law - Lev. 20:1-27; Num. 8:22; Ps. 19:13; presumptuous high-handed sins as murder adultery, blasphemy, and idolatry).
2. Apostasy - a departure from the faith - I Jn. 2:19
3. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit - Mt. 12:28 - such sin, however, is committed by an unbeliever (not a "brother") and the consequences for it are "eternal" (Mk. 3:29) not merely temporal.



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I. *THE "SIN UNTO DEATH"* MAY BE COMMITTED BY BELIEVERS

(by a "brother" - v.16)

"His brother" - not speaking of a biological brother per se but a spiritual brother. A brother in the Lord i.e. a fellow Christian.

Examples of believers who died pre-maturely because of their sin:

--Ananias & Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)

--Hezekiah (is. 38:1-15)

--The unnamed "man of God" (I Ki. 13:21-24)

Bible examples of the sin unto death:

1. The branch that doesn't abide in the vine (Jn. 15:2, 6 - Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned.)

2. Those who participate in the Lord's Supper unworthily (I Cor. 11:30 - For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.)

II. *THE "SIN UNTO DEATH"* MAY BE SEEN (PERCEIVED) BY OTHERS

("If any man see…")

The word "see" makes it clear "that it is not merely a matter of personal suspicion but an observed fact" (Hiebert, p. 258).

"Sin a sin" - sinning a sin; John describes someone who is committing a particular sin habitually; such sinning is evidently an action which could be seen by others or at least known by others.

III. *THE "SIN UNTO DEATH"* LEADS TO PHYSICAL DEATH

("there is a sin unto death")

The death in view in vv. 16-17 is not spiritual or eternal death but physical death.

Proofs:
1. You can't "see" spiritual nor eternal death, but you can "see" physical death. (John is describing sin which would lead to a death which could be seen).

2. The person described as sinning is called a "brother" implying he is a saved individual (an unsaved person is spiritually dead and faces eternal death; a brother cannot).

> "When a Christian falls into sinning, his salvation is not jeopardized, he does not revert to his unregenerate state of spiritual death; but, in certain cases, he may incur the penalty of physical death" (Guy H. King, p. 119)

3. The "life" described is clearly physical life, because no one receives spiritual life or eternal life merely based on the prayers of another.

The only other time John used the expression "unto death", it referred to physical death (Jn. 11:4).

There are physical consequences to sin.

"Sin" often times leads to "sickness" (Ps. 32:3-4 - When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.
4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.) (Ps. 38:3 - *There is* no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither *is there any* rest in my bones because of my sin.) (Ja. 5:15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.)

Just as there is a definite connection between "sin" and "sickness," so there is a definite relationship between "sin" and "death".

Some sins obviously lead to sickness & death (ex. Drugs; alcohol; tobacco; immoral sexual behavior etc.)

However, the sin which leads to death in your life may be chronic lying; pornography, unrepentant bitterness, etc.

Living righteously not only enhances the <u>quality</u> of your life (I Pet. 3:10 - "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile";, but will add to the <u>duration</u> of your life.

Examples:
--The obedient son or daughter (Eph. 6:2 - Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise;")

--The Godly pregnant mother (I Tim. 2:15 - "Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.")

--“Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, for ever” - Dt. 4:40

--SEE: Psalm 128:1-6

“There is a sin not unto death” - Although ultimately every physical death is the result of sin, it is not necessarily the immediate result of personal sin. Not every sin is recompensed with immediate consequences. If we died every time we sinned, none of us would be alive past the age of three!

However sin kills!

> Few college football coaches have made a point against drugs as effectively as Erk Russell of Georgia Southern College. He arranged for a couple of good ol' country boys to burst into a routine team meeting and throw a writhing, hissing, six-foot-long rattlesnake onto a table in front of the squad. "Everyone screamed and scattered," Russell recalls. "I told them, 'When cocaine comes into a roon, you're not nearly as apt to leave as when that rattlesnake comes in. But they'll both kill you!"

IV. *THE “SIN UNTO DEATH”* MAY BE AN <u>UNREPENTANT WILLFUL HABIT</u> *(“Sin a sin” - lit. “Sinning a sin”)*

Whatever the “sin unto death” would include, it is probable that this sin is. . .

--an <u>outward</u> sin (one that could be seen, observed, and known by others)

--a <u>willful</u> sin (Heb. 10:26-27)

--often a <u>persistent</u> sin (Heb. 12:6-9)
(The present tense participles in I Jn. 5:16 imply a persistent activity)
(But the sin unto death is not necessarily a persistent sin--- it may be one strike and you’re out! - EX: I Ki. 13:21-24

--A <u>shameful</u> sin (Num. 20:12, 24)
(God’s testimony is profaned)

It’s not necessarily the <u>enormity</u> of the sin that would lead the sinner to death, but the unrepentant <u>persistence</u> (despite God’s chastisement) that would merit such a measure as death (hence the statement in v. 18 that one born of God will not persist in living a sinful lifestyle).

God doesn’t allow His “kids’” (children’s) sin to go unchecked and undisciplined.

To whom much is given much shall be required (to sin against light calls for the swiftest chastisement).

V. *THE "SIN UNTO DEATH"* IS KNOWN ONLY TO GOD

("There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for (inquire about) it")

"There is a sin unto death" - the word "a" is not in the Greek; literally it says "There is sin unto death."

Showing that God is not speaking of one, particular sin but of sin in general. Hence, John calls "all unrighteousness sin" (v. 17).

These verses give no credence to the RCC idea of making a distinction between venial and mortal sin. **"All unrighteousness is sin."** (v. 17)

"Used without a definite article, both nouns 'sin' and 'death' are qualitative rather than specific" (Hiebert, p. 261).

--In Numbers 21:6, the sin which led to death was Israel's griping (a complaining attitude) ("And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel")
--In I Ki. 13:21-24, the sin was a prophet's disobedience to a clear command of God.

--In. Lev. 10:1-2, the sin was offering up strange fire (incense) unto God (cp. Num. 3:4) (Lev. 10:1-2 - And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not.)

--In II Sam. 6:6-7, the sin was not carrying the ark in the manner prescribed by God

A. Since we don't know what the sin unto death is, **We should not spend time inquiring of God about what it is**

"I do not say that he shall pray for it" - the word "pray" is <u>not</u> the same word as "ask." This word "pray" (*erotao)* means to <u>inquire</u> or "ask about", to request information about (Rienecker, p. 795).

Since the "sin unto death" is not a particular sin, but would vary according to the discretion of God, we need not inquire and seek to find out what the specific sin unto death is.

"All unrighteousness is sin" - Whatever it is, if it is not right (according to God's measure of righteousness) it is sin [Sin is missing God's mark].

There are many ways in which people miss God's mark. We all have come short of His glorious standards in thought, word, and deed. (both in attitudes and actions; both in heart motives and tongue and deed).

B. Since we don't know what the sin unto death is,
We should <u>pray</u> for every sinning brother

"We must never forget the discussion of this 'sin leading to death' is in the context of praying according to the will of God. It is <u>always</u> God's will to pray for people who are committing sins that don't lead to death." (Hocking, p. 74)

"He shall ask" - a future tense verb with <u>imperatival</u> force [NOTE: many imperatives are stated as future tense verbs in the Bible, such as the 10 Commandments - Ex. 20).

God expects us to fulfill a family obligation and <u>pray</u> for brothers or sisters who go astray.

"His brother" - Don't say with Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4:9).

Love is what prompts us to pray for others.

What is worse: to see a hungry person and not give him food, or to see a sinning person and not offer prayer for him? The latter! Because sin leads to death.

"Not unto death, he shall ask" - We only pray for the living, never for the dead. If a living brother is seen sinning and that sin does not lead to death, we should pray for him, while there is still hope.

--Abraham prayed for Abimelech and he did not die (Gen. 20:7, 17).

--Moses prayed for the nation of Israel and they were not wiped out (Ex. 32:10-14; Num. 14:11-21).

--Job prayed for his accusers and God spared them (Job 42:7-10).

--When the elders of the church pray for the sick, God will spare them (Ja. 5:14-15).

"He (God) shall give him life" - Asking is man's job; giving life is God's job! (Plummer).

Prayer does curtail death for one who does not commit a sin from which there is no return.

Some people reach a point of "no return" with God [No prayer will affect a change in such a person's life.] However, since we don't know who it is who crosses the line with God, we should pray for everyone who drifts into sin.

C. Since we don't know what the sin unto death is,
We should <u>fear all sin</u> and it's consequences

Just because some sin does not lead to immediate death does not mean that some sin is <u>Inconsequential</u> or should be <u>minimized</u> (cp. Hiebert, p. 263).

All sin is <u>serious</u> and has <u>consequences</u> (the consequences may not be immediate, nor easily observable, but they will come according to the law of sowing and reaping.

Dr. Ralph Sockman writes about an experience he had while standing on the edge of Niagra Falls one clear, cold March day. Wrapped in white winter garments, the falls glistened in the bright sun.
As some birds swooped down to snatch a drink from the clear water, Sockman's companion told how he had seen birds carried over the edge of the precipice. As they dipped down for a drink, tiny droplets of ice would form on their wings. As they returned for additional drinks more ice would weigh down their bodies until they couldn't rise above the cascading waters. Flapping their wings, the birds would suddenly drop over the falls. Today in the Word, October, 1990, p. 14

Concluding lessons:

*Don't view sin <u>lightly</u>

We ought to hate sin as Billy Sunday did.
He said: I hate sin; as long as I have a fist, I'll beat it to death
as long as I have a foot, I'll kick it to death
as long as I have teeth, I'll bite it to death
And then when I get old
and am fistless, and footless and toothless,
I'll gum it to death!

*Don't presume on God's patience

*Remember, Sin Kills!

The Venus flytrap (Dionaea muscipula) is a carnivorous plant native to subtropical wetlands on the East Coast of the United States in North Carolina and South Carolina.[3] It catches its prey—chiefly insects and arachnids—with a trapping structure formed by the terminal portion of each of the plant's leaves, which is triggered by tiny hairs (called "trigger hairs" or "sensitive hairs") on their inner surfaces.

When an insect or spider crawling along the leaves contacts a hair, the trap prepares to close, snapping shut only if another contact occurs within approximately twenty seconds of the first strike. Triggers may occur if one-tenth of the insect is within contact.[4] The requirement of redundant triggering in this mechanism serves as a safeguard against wasting energy by trapping objects with no nutritional value, and the plant will only begin digestion after five more stimuli to ensure it has caught a live bug worthy of consumption.

Digestion takes about ten days, after which the prey is reduced to a husk of chitin. The trap then reopens, and is ready for reuse.

According to Daniel Schaeffer in his book Dancing With A Shadow, the Eskimos devised a way of killing wolves. They planted a knife in the ice with the handle buried. Then they put chunks of fresh meat on the blade and let it freeze. The wolves would smell the blood from afar and come to devour it. As they licked the frozen meat, they worked themselves into a frenzy. Soon they cut their tongues on the razor-sharp blade and began feeding their hunger with their own blood. They would lick until they slowly bled to death.