

Sin Unto Death

1 John 5:16-18



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FOCAL Read in Unison 1 John 5:16-18 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. {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.¹

In this day of positive, uplifting preaching, we rarely hear the harsher things of Scripture. Hell is rarely preached, punishment infrequently, the Sovereign Judgment of God very little. We see so much bad news on television we - at least I - want to come to Church and hear good, uplifting news. But there are certain things taught in the Scripture that *need* to be taught. In fact, if I love you, I *must* teach them. One of those doctrines is *the sin unto death*.

The Bible teaches that there is a *sin unto death*, that you, by actively disobeying God, can bring *premature physical death* on yourself. The Apostle John was so impressed with the *sin unto death* that he closed this letter discussing it. However, the Apostle John is not the only writer that the Holy Spirit used to discuss the sin unto death. James wrote:

James 1:14-16 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. {15} Then **when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished,**

¹ All Scripture text is King James Version, unless otherwise noted

bringeth forth death. {16} Do not err, my beloved brethren.

James is very graphic, showing unChristlike lust to be an emotional desire *much like a pregnant woman who gives birth to sin*, and sin like a child who brings forth that which is death. The Apostle Paul wrote:

1 Corinthians 15:56 **The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.**

The stinger on the wasp carries poison that hurts whomever it strikes.

The stinger on that wasp called *death* is *sin*. Sin and death are bound together, one leading to the other with all surety. Sin and death are *bound together*.

We die because we sin, we sin and we hasten death. The Apostle also wrote:

Romans 7:13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. **But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.**

Sin worketh death. Sin brings death. What *wages* does sin pay? Does it bring joy to those who enjoy it? The Bible says:

Romans 6:23 For **the wages of sin is death;** but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sin always pays off in death - ALWAYS! You *never* sin with impunity. Sin always brings a payment with it, and unconfessed sin does lead to death. Let's see what our text has to say about the *sin unto death*.

Christians Work Together To Serve Christ And To Protect One Another

We read in our text:

FOCAL 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.

This is a little choppy in the English, but the general idea is this. **If any man see his brother sin -**

God has designed Christianity to be a *group effort*. Though many may hold to the lie that they can worship Christ *apart from the Church*, this is not what our Scripture teaches.

Jesus said:

Matthew 16:18 ... upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Christians are saved beings who function *together* in a Body that Jesus called *the Church*. We love one another. **When one member suffers, all the members suffer with it (1 Corinthians 12:26).** We serve one another. *We use our gifts together in the Body of Christ, the Church. Now to each one [of us] the manifestation of the Spirit [that is, the spiritual gifts] is given for the common good. All these [gifts] are the work of one and the same [Holy] Spirit, and he gives [gifts] to each one, just as he determines. The body [of Christ] is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. (1 Corinthians 12:7, 11-12^{NIV}).* The Church is *designed to be a functioning unit*, working together to evangelize the world for Christ while tending to its members. Listen Beloved:

- The *saved* are *added to the Church* (Acts 2:47)
- The *Church* is *persecuted* (Acts 8:1, 3; Galatians 1:13; Philippians 3:6)
- The *Church* *sends missionaries* (Acts 11:22; 15:22)
- The *Church* *prays* for its members (Acts 12:5)
- The *Church* *ordains its leaders* (Acts 14:23)
- The *Church* *was purchased with the Blood* (Acts 20:28)
- The Scripture is addressed *to the Church* (1

Corinthians 1:2; 4:7; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; Colossians 4:16; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:15; Philemon 2; 3 John 9; Revelation 2-3)

- The *Church* is *distinct from Israel, formed by God* (1 Corinthians 10:32)
- God sets the spiritual gifts *in the Church* (1 Corinthians 12:28)
- Spiritual gifts are specifically given to *build up the Church* (1 Corinthians 14:12)
- Christ is the *Head of the Church*, and we are *His Body* (Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23-24; Colossians 1:18)
- The *Church* is *to glorify Christ* (Ephesians 3:21)
- The *Church* is *the Bride of Christ* (Ephesians 5:25-32)
- We praise God *in the Church* (Hebrews 2:12; Ephesians 5:19)
- We are in *direct disobedience to God* if we neglect *Church fellowship* (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Since the Church is designed to be a *functioning unit*, is it so strange to believe that - if we see a *brother or a sister in sin* - we should *tell them about it*? If we see a brother in sin

FOCAL 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.

Which is **not unto death**, that is, the believer is seen in sin and it has not yet led to death, then we should *tell that person that they are sinning*. I know in this day and age this is considered being a *busy body*, but again:

Romans 6:23 For **the wages of sin is death** ...

Sin always will eventually lead to death.

If you love someone, you tell them when you see them in a *clearly defined act of sin*. If we love one another, we will gently correct *using the Scripture, not our opinion*, when we see a fellow member of the Church in sin.

Dr. Thomas Constable² stated:

Many Christians have failed to realize that sinning always leads to dying, even among Christians (Romans 6:23). While it is true that no Christian will ever experience spiritual death (eternal separation from God), we do normally experience the physical consequences of our sinning. The fact that we all die physically is the proof of this.

When a believer commits sin, he puts his foot on a road that will eventually lead to death if *not corrected*. But if the believer *confesses* his or her sin, then the *curse is turned to blessing*. We turn away from the sin unto death by *turning back to Christ*. How do we turn back to Christ?

² soniclight.org commentary on 1 John , pg 62

**We turn back to Christ
by confessing our sin to God.**

The Bible says:

1 John 1:9 If we **confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

Jesus not only forgives, but He *cleanses* as well. He removes the *wages of sin* and returns us to a right relationship in Him. The Apostle Paul told the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 11:30-32 {because of your sins} many [are] weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. {31} For **if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. {32} But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.**

The Christian *belongs to Christ* and *belongs to His Church*.

If we recognize our sin and confess it, we **should not be judged**. The chastening hand of God is lifted. The wise Christian, like the Psalmist, will acknowledge

Psalms 32:5 ... my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

When you (Psalms 38:18) declare your iniquity; and are sorry for your sin God removes the penalty in most cases. Furthermore,

Sin which is *discontinued* is not "unto death"

We read in the Scripture:

Hebrews 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, **let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset [us]**, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

God is very clear when He says:

Ezekiel 18:21-32 **But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.** {22} All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. {23} Have I any pleasure at all that the

wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: [and] not that he should return from his ways, and live? {24} **But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, [and] doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked [man] doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.** {25} Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal? {26} When a righteous [man] turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die. {27} Again, when the wicked [man] turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. {28} Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. {29} Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal? {30} Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn [yourselves] from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. {31} **Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have**

transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? {32} For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn [yourselves], and live ye.

When *sin is discontinued*, when repentance comes, when the believer returns to the Lord His God, then the sin is *not unto death*.

Yet when we ignore the consequences, and continually draw toward the evil, then the **wages of sin is death** even for the believer.

Finally, the Christian who responds *positively* to Divine discipline is not under the "sin unto death"

The Father *chastens* or *punishes* those whom He loves. The Bible says:

Hebrews 12:6-8 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. {7} If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? {8} But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

When the Psalmist sinned the Lord chastened or punished him. He, like an obedient child, *responded* to the punishment, and because of that David was **not given over to death**. We read:

Psalms 118:17-18 I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD. {18} The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.

Christians are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Christians are *indwelt* by the Holy Spirit of God, and are able to choose to *yield themselves to righteousness or unrighteousness*. The Bible says:

Romans 6:16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

We can choose to yield to **sin unto death** - for sin will ultimately bring death - or we can yield to **obedience unto righteousness**. We choose, so we should choose wisely.

We Defeat The Enemy By Standing Together Against His Tricks And Against Sin

FOCAL 1 John 5:17-18 All unrighteousness is sin:

and there is a sin not unto death. {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.

It is possible to sin without falling into the *sin unto death*. The sin unto death - as we have demonstrated - is a state that a Christian enters into when he or she *perpetually or habitually acts unrighteously*. The Apostle writes:

FOCAL 1 John 5:18 ... We know that **whosoever is born of God sinneth not ...**

Robertson³ says of this verse:

Sinneth not (ouch hamartanei). Lineal Present Active Indicative, “does not keep on sinning,” as he has already shown in 1 John 3:4-10.

In other words,

Robertson says this should read **whosoever is born of God *does not keep on sinning***.

Before you were saved you sinned without regard for it. Now that you are saved and God is inside you, He expects you to - in His power - avoid sin. Sin is *unrighteousness* or *doing that which is not right in God's eyes* no matter what that is. Sin is not defined by *ten*

commandments, but is now defined by *love and God the Holy Spirit*. If you are Christ's then you *know* the right from the wrong. He whispers conviction to you when you sin, and confirms your error by His Word. Since God designed you as a *new Creature in Him*, and since you are called to *serve Him by love*, you are to avoid sin. If you do not avoid sin then God will remove you from this life. This is the teaching Scripture.

Can we prove this from Scripture? Absolutely! The New Testament clearly teaches that **"Faith alone saves (Ephesians 2:8,9; Titus 3:5), but saving faith is never alone."**

If you are saved God expects you to *act saved*. If you do not *act saved*, but continue in sin the same as you did *before you were saved* then He will remove you from this life and take you into the next. Look at these examples ...

In the early Church **Ananias and Sapphira** met an early death for **lying to God (Acts 5:1-10)**. The Corinthian Christians were meeting premature deaths for **mocking the Lord's Table (1 Corinthians 11:30,31)**. In the Old Testament **King Saul** died the sin unto death for disobeying God (**1 Chronicles 10:13-14; 1 Samuel 13:9-14**). The Apostle Paul *delivered Hymenaeus and Alexander* to Satan (**1 Timothy 1:19-20**) for destruction because they were guilty of blasphemy. He also surrendered the unnamed young man of **1 Corinthians 5** to *Satan for the destruction of the flesh*. These are ample testimonies to the fact that there is a sin unto death,

3 Robertson's Word Pictures In The Greek New Testament

premature death for the sinning believer, and we should love one another enough to help each other stay away from this thing.

Let's Summarize This Study!

1. Believers can help other believers avoid it the sin unto death: **1 John 5:16-17**
2. God releases the sinner unto the sin unto death: **Psalm 118:17-18**
3. A backslidden state leads to the sin unto death: **Jeremiah 9:16; 44:12**
4. Reviling the sacrament of Communion can lead to the sin unto death: **1 Corinthians 11:29-31**
5. Lying to the Holy Spirit causes the sin unto death: **Acts 5:1-10**
6. Repeated unconfessed sin leads to the sin unto death: **1 Corinthians 5:1-5**
7. Familiarity with demons leads to the sin unto death: **1 Chronicles 10:13-14**
8. Blasphemy and false doctrine leads to the sin unto death: **1 Timothy 1:19-20**

