

Prayer For Those in Sin

July 23, 2017

1 Jn 5:16-18 If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this. 17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death. 18 We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him.

I. Word and phrase study of 1Jn 5:16-18

16 If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death

- Literally "sinning a sin". There is no exact parallel in the NT to this phrase.
- "committing," = signifies "tendency toward," describing the tendency towards sin.
- Sees implies firsthand knowledge and not something of a suspicion or hearsay.
- brother = a fellow Christian

he shall ask and he (God) will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death

- he = the individual intercessor
- God = God is implied; literally "he," referring to God.
- him = the person for whom intercession is made.

- shall ask = prayer

Praying for such a one should be our natural and spontaneous action. (Jas 5:19-20)

- not leading to death

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 6:23)

Life (eternal) is fellowship with Christ

Jn 5:11-12 And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

Death is separation from Him.

Jn 8:24 Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." (Jn 6:50; 8:51; 11:26)

There is a sin leading to death, I do not say that he should make request for this.

Literally, "not concerning this do I say that he should make request."

The thought is of a sin which is of such a character that it throws the offender beyond the reach of mercy, and which is not to be pardoned, sin that which wholly separates one from Christ.

The apostle does not here say what that sin is; nor how they might know what it is; nor even that in any case they could determine that it had been committed.

The view of John Wesley

The sin not unto death is any sin which God does not choose to punish with death.

A sin of which death was the penalty, or would be the result, unless it were arrested.

17 All unrighteousness is sin

This is an offence against that which is right. Every breach of duty is a manifestation of sin. All sin tends to make fellowship with God less complete. Yet not all sin is equal, nor is all in a fixed and unalterable degree.

The statement that 'all unrighteousness is sin' is a comprehensive definition of sin - lawlessness is sin, and conversely sin is lawlessness. (1Jn 3:4; Rom. 6:13)

and there is a sin not leading to death

Jas 5:14-15 Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; 15 and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. (Jn 11:4)

18 We know that no one who is born of God sins

This is not referring to occasional sin, but habitual sin, the practice of sin. Believers have a new nature ("God's seed," 1Jn 3:9), and have new desires and appetites that are not interested in sinning.

- Christianity is not an isolated past act, it is a life of ongoing repentance, faith, obedience, and perseverance.
- Christianity is not a ticket to heaven, purchased in the past, nor a fire insurance policy taken out to protect one from a lifestyle of selfish, godless living!

but He who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him.

"He [Christ] who was born of God keeps him [the believer] and the evil one does not touch him"

II. Questions

A. What is the sin that leads to death?

It is impossible to determine their exact meaning. Some of the many explanations are as follows:

1. This is an allusion to a distinction in the Jewish law, "a sin unto death;" is:
 - a. A sin, or transgression, to which the law had assigned the punishment of death; such as idolatry, incest, blasphemy, breach of the Sabbath, and the like.
 - b. A sin not unto death, i.e. transgressions of ignorance, inadvertence, etc., and such as, in their own nature, appear to be comparatively light and trivial. Such distinctions did exist in the Jewish synagogue.
2. A sin that God punishes with deadly sickness or sudden death. (Ac 5:1-11; 13:8-12)
3. Sins punished by excommunication.
4. Any unrepented habitual sin persisted in by a believer and unconfessed by him.
1Jn 3:4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. (1Jn 3:9 5:18)
5. The sin by which a Christian falls back into a non-Christian way of living.
6. The anti-Christian denial that Jesus is the Christ.
Rejecting the humanity or deity of Jesus,
2Jn 7 ... who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. (1Jn 4:1-3; 1Tim 3:16)
Col 2:9 For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, (Col 1:19; Jn 10:30, 38; 1Tim 3:16)
7. Blaspheming the Holy Spirit (Mt 12:31; Mk 3:28; Lk 12:10).
8. Rejecting Christ as Savior
Jn 3:18 He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (Jn 5:39-40; 8:24; Mk 16:16)
9. Some feel that this is referring to the sin of murder.
1 Jn 3:15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. (Gen 9:5-6; Ex 21:12-14; Lev 24:17; Nu 35:30-33)

If a Christian should, in a moment of passion, murder another person, then we should not feel at liberty to pray for his release from the death penalty, because God has already stated that it is His will that "whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed." (Ex 21:12-14)

B. Is it possible to fall away from faith or turn against Jesus Christ?

Scripture identifies this danger and warns against its negative consequences.

Apostasy described:

The person who falls away because of persecution, affliction or temptation.

Mt 13:20-21 The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21 yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. (Lk 8:13; Mk 4:16-17; Mt 24:10-12)

The person who falls away from grace embracing self works.

Gal 5:4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. (Gal 1:6)

The person who falls away, not willing to repent.

Heb 6:4-8 For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame. 7 For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; 8 but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned. (1Jn 5:16)

Warnings against apostasy:

Warning against denying Jesus

Mt 10:33 whoever denies Me ... I will also deny him (Mk 8:38; Lk 12:9; 2Tim 2:12)

Warning against not abiding in Jesus

Jn 15:6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

Warning against unbelief

Heb 3:12 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.

Warning against willful sin

Heb 10:26-27 For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES. (see Heb 10:26-31; 1Jn 5:16-18)

Apostasy predicted:

Mt 24:10-13 "At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. 11 "Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. 12 "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. 13 "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. (Mt 24:24-25; Mk 13:22-23)

1Jn 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

1Tim 4:1 But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons (1Tim 4:1-4; 2Thes 2:3; 2Pt 2:1-3, 10--22; 3:17; Jude 4, 8-13)

Bible examples of apostasy:

Old Testament examples:

King Saul (1Sa 15:1, 28; 16:14; 2Sa 7:15)

King Uzziah (2Ch 26:16-21)

King Ahaz (2Ch 28:19-20)

New Testament examples:

Judas (Mt 26:14-16; Mk 14:10-11; Lk 22:3-6)

Ananias and Sapphira (Ac 5:1-11)

Hymenaeus and Alexander (1Tim 1:19-20)

Demas (2Tim 4:10)

Jezebel (Rev 2:20-22)

C. How should we respond to a fellow-Christian in sin?

Prayer

1Jn 5:16 If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this.

Confront

Mt 18:15-17 "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 "But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that **BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED**. 17 "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Jas 5:19-20 My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, 20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

Restore

Gal 6:1 Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.

Examples of those who were restored:

Samson (Jdg 16:20, 28-30)

David (Ps 51:1-17)

Peter (Lk 22:61-62; Mt 26:74; Mk 14:72; Jn 18:27; 21:15-17)

John Mark (Ac 15:37-38; 2Tim 4:11)

Don't associate or fellowship with them.

2Thes 3:14-15 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. 15 Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. (2Cor 2:5-10)

Deliver to Satan

1Cor 5:1-5 It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. 2 You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst. 3 For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, 5 I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. (1Tim 1:18-20)

To deliver to Satan - it may be observed:

1. That it implies excommunication from the Church.
2. That it implies something more, the nature of which is not clearly known.
3. That casting the offender out of the Church involved casting him back into the heathen world.
4. That Paul has in view the reformation of the offender: "that the spirit may be saved," etc.
5. This reformation is to be through affliction, disease, pain, or loss, which also he is wont to conceive as Satan's work. (from Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament)

D. What are the consequences of apostasy:

Deception:

2Thes 2:11-12 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, 12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. (2Cor 11:2-3)

Hardened by unbelief:

Heb 3:12-14 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end,

Enslaved by self-works

Gal 1:6-7 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; 7 which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. (Gal 3:1-3, 10; 4:8-9)

Defeat

Nu 14:43 For the Amalekites and the Canaanites will be there in front of you, and you will fall by the sword, inasmuch as you have turned back from following the LORD. And the LORD will not be with you.”

Jdg 2:14-15 The anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around them, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. 15 Wherever they went, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had spoken and as the LORD had sworn to them, so that they were severely distressed. (Jdg 2:12-15)

Loss

1Cor 3:11-15 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. 14 If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. 15 If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Sickness - death

1Cor 11:27-32 Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. 28 But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. 30 For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. 31 But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.

God warns that sin can lead to physical death - people who died because of their sin.

Nadab and Abihu, (2 sons of Aaron) died because they disobeyed God (Lev 10:1-7).

Korah and his clan opposed God and died (Num 16).

Achan was stoned because he disobeyed God's orders at Jericho (Josh. 6-7).

A man named Uzzah touched the ark and died (2Sam 6).

Ananias and Sapphira lied to God about their offering, and they both died (Ac 5:1-11).

In Corinth some died because of the way they partook of the Lord's table (1Cor 11:30).

III. Pray - intercede on behalf of others

Believers are to pray for the needs of others; Scripture provides many examples of intercession

A. We are our brother's keeper

Gen 4:9 Then the LORD said to Cain, " Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper ?"

B. We are to value others

Phil 2:3-4 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

C. We are to intercede for one another

1Jn 5:16 If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. ...

Eph 6:18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, (1Th 5:25; Ph'm 22; Heb 13:18-19; Jas 5:14-16)

D. We are also to intercede for our enemies

Mt 5:44 But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, (Lk 6:28; 23:34)

E. We are also to intercede for our rulers

1Ti 2:1-2 First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.

D. Examples of people praying for others

Moses prays for the Israelites (Dt 9:18-19; Ex 32:9-14; 34:9; Nu 14:11-19; Dt 9:25-29)

Samuel prays for Israel (1Sa 7:5-9; 12:19-23)

Job prays for his friends (Job 42:10)

Jeremiah - God forbade him to pray for the people (Jer 7:16; 11:14; 14:11).

Hezekiah for deliverance from the Assyrian army (2Ki 19:14-19; Isa 37:14-20)

Ezra for protection and a safe journey (Ezr 8:21-23)

Daniel for the restoration of Jerusalem and fulfillment of prophecy (Dan 9:1-19)

Paul for the believers in Ephesus and Colosse (Eph 1:16-19 ; 3:14-19; Col 1:9-12)

Jesus Christ for unity and oneness all of his disciples (Jn 17:6-26)

E. Jesus intercedes for believers

1Jn 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; (Heb 7:25)

Rom 8:34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. (Isa 53:12)

F. The Holy Spirit intercedes for believers

Rom 8:26-27 In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; 27 and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Resources used:

Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament

Adam Clarke's Commentary

The Bible exposition commentary

Nelson's new illustrated Bible commentary

Dictionary of Bible Themes:

B. F. Westcott Commentaries on the Greek New Testament