

## THE UNFORGIVEN SIN?

*(Scripture: 1 John 5:16-19)*

### **Introduction:**

I equate reading the Bible to eating different kind of food items. My mom was a widow and she had seven children, but still she would feed us solid with little money! Breakfast was always my favorite! Lunch could be just lentil curry and rice with some vegetable. Nighttime will be a hit or miss dinner. Someday it may be a nice fish curry, or it may be just buttermilk and pickle. My mom was very creative too. She may serve some strange tasting food made from cheap ingredients and we would eat that also somehow. Likewise, we may eat some bitter food also from the Bible, but it can still edify us. Here is another tough passage, and no one knows the exact interpretation of this passage. Your guesses will be as good as any scholar's guesses and we may all come to different conclusions. But something interesting happens when we try to crack open a tough passage. So, I want to start with a warning. Do not build your theology of sin based upon this passage. I would encourage you to mull over it and meditate on various possibilities for the rest of your life. There are things we will never understand in our lifetime. As Paul says, we see things darkly or vaguely, but when we see our Lord face to face, we will understand everything! Today's portion is not milk of the word, it is not a milk shake, it is not a great vegetable or our favorite meat, but it is just hard bones. Just try to get the marrow out of it if you can!

Whenever the sin topic came, we were clashed with two different ideas in 1 John! There is this one idea that those who are born of the Spirit cannot sin at all. The other idea is we may sin, but God is faithful and just to forgive "ALL" our sins! Most of the time, these clashing thoughts will come parallel to each other!

Here are some examples of perfection vs imperfection! We went through these verses before and you can refer my sermons on these topics on our [acts242church.org](http://acts242church.org) website.

### **1 John 1:6.**

*If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;*

### **1 John 1:7-10**

*7but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

*8If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.*

*9If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

*10If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.*

### **1 John 2:3-6**

*3By this we know that we have come to know Him if we keep His commandments.*

*4The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

*5but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:*

*6the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.*

### **1 John 3:4-9. Points to perfection**

*4Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.*

*5You know that He appeared to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.*

*6No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.*

*7Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.*

*8the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning.*

*The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.*

*9No one who is born of God practices sin because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*

This passage clearly points to Christian perfection.

Yes, there is a mixed message here. We must not build our theology based upon few passages. Now with this in mind let us pay attention to today's Scripture portion!

### **1 John 5:16, 17**

*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.*

*17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death.*

There are two kinds of sins discussed here. One is sin not leading to death, and the other is sin that is leading to death. Please note the present continuous tense here. This sin continuously drags us to the point of no return - death! Before we can dig deep into this Word, let us define what sin is.

We come across sin in ADAM and Eve's story first, and we are very familiar with it. Some call this sin as disobedience to the word of God or disobedience to God's law. Others call this act as a rebellious act of deliberate disobedience. But that is a very simplified definition of sin.

Please note, the sin of ADAM and Eve was mentioned as the only sin, and not as sins (plural). So there is only one sin, sin of rejecting the tree of life, which is dethroning Christ from our heart as Lord, and we enthrone ourselves as the ultimate god of our lives, so that we may choose what is good and bad in our lives (tree of knowledge of good and evil - a form of self-idolatry). Remember, Satan told Eve, you shall be like

gods if you eat that food! This way, we may live as we please in our own lives, and there is no one above us to dictate us! Sin is actually breaking our relationship with God and elevating ourselves as gods to make our own choices of both good and evil in life. Prodigal son is a classic example. Not abiding in Christ, and becoming independent of God, doing our own things in life is sin. This sin of denying God continuously is the sin that produces death.

Had they chosen the tree of life, the Spirit of Christ, and abided in Him, they would have done very well. They had to just follow Him, and He would have led them to Holy living. But since now they chose to live themselves without God, they had to be programmed with various kinds of laws and those laws would bring the knowledge of sin, and that knowledge of good and evil will be a constant struggle in their life! This is for those who are well versed with Scripture. (Romans 7).

Rejecting Christ, the tree of life, is a sin unto spiritual death. We cannot live apart from God! Adam and Eve wanted to have both ways: the tree of life as well as the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God said, no, you cannot have both. They could not have both eternal life and death. They had to choose one or the other, and they failed. They should have been put to death, because the wages of sin is death. But out of mercy, God spared them by making an animal sacrifice on their behalf and clothed them with the coats of skin of an animal, probably sheep! After a long life of over nine hundred.... they did die eventually, and thereby paying the full penalty of sin which is death!

Now let us come back to 1 John 5:16,17 again.

**1 John 5:16,17**

*16If 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.*

*17All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death.*

Many scholars have written so much about this passage. Some say that the death here refers to eternal separation and others think that it means physical death.

Verse 12 in the same chapter 5 says that he that hath the Son hath life; and He that hath not the Son of God hath not life! Same thought is repeated in v16. God shall give him life for them that sin not unto death! It could very well be eternal life.

Those who support physical death point to these stories:

- Man, who gathered sticks on sabbath day. (Num. 15:32-36)
- Nadab and Abihu. (Lev. 10:1,2). Don't rend your clothes or mourn for them! You do not have to mourn or pray for people when God punishes and puts them to death in anger. (World war and Hitler).
- Achan idolatry. (Josh. 7:16-26)
- Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). They lied to the Holy Spirit.

- Adultery with stepmother. (1 Cor. 5:1-5). Such a person to be delivered to Satan that for the destruction of the flesh, the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ!
- Abuse of Lord's supper. (11:27-30)

So, we have to see carefully if this death points to physical death or spiritual death and then try to interpret it.

There is a second issue also. Does this passage refer to the believers or unbelievers? The passage here says brother committing a sin. It has to be about believers committing sin.

Commented [1]:

If it is indeed believers, then it brings about another issue. Will the believers lose their salvation? This is a huge topic, and there are plenty of Scriptures that we can quote from Scriptures to prove our points. I am saying all these things to make you see the complexity of this passage. We see things vaguely. A good Bible scholar will be very humble because he does not know as he ought to know. Do not be ashamed to say that you do not know the answer. Do not try to pretend that you have the answers for all the questions.

Some scholars think that this brother addresses to any church participant and some of them could be just professing Christians but believing differently.

Sin is a sin is a sin! There is no good sin or bad sin. There is no small sin or big sin. What does the writer try to say here? Is he referring to the law of Moses? In the law of Moses, there are sins like adultery, idolatry, blasphemy, receive death sentence if it is proven. But for sins like theft, property damage, covetousness is not sin unto death. If it is so, why we should pray only for sin not unto death? What is the author's definition of sin unto death and sin not unto death? No one knows!

Please note the phrase sin leading to death. Here the word "sin" is singular. Is it possible the author here refers to the sin that Jesus was addressing in Mathews 12?

**Matthew 12:31,32**

*31 Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven.*

*32 Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.*

This is another tough passage. Here Jesus clearly mentions about one sin: the blasphemy against the Spirit that can never be forgiven, in this world, as well as the next world. We cannot exactly pinpoint what kind of blaspheme Jesus means. But in this context, the Pharisees accused Jesus that He performed miracles through the evil

spirit of Baalzebub in Him. But Jesus performed miracle through the power of the Holy Spirit!

Modern fundamental Christians seem to be making the same mistake also. Bible clearly talks about speaking in tongues as one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. There are people who believe that this gift is still available, and they claim that it is operating in their lives, and there are some who do not believe that. It is better not to judge each other in this matter and not attack another as enemies of the Gospel. But unfortunately, fundamental Christians insist that those people who speak in tongue has devil in them. A dangerous accusation!

I have warned you about building our thoughts on just one passage. We must consider the entire Bible to see what the whole counsel of God talks about a particular topic, in this case, sin, and then come to a conclusion. It is dangerous to judge somebody erroneously with just one passage.

If you take the history of Israel in the Bible, it is obvious that the Israelites were very rebellious. But we can see how God handled them. He chastised them, and then reached out and tried to draw them close to Him. He did this repeatedly. The entire Bible teaches us that our God is a God of second chance! There was sin of idolatry which deserved death, yet God intervened.

Israelites were stiff necked people, and very rebellious for centuries, yet God reached out to them many times and forgave them. We cannot really judge which is a forgivable sin and which is unforgivable. We should be praying for everyone, and for their every need, according to His will and purpose. The author was only "suggesting" that it is ok if you do not pray for the sin that leads to death. He did not lay it down as a commandment.

1 John 5:18,19

*18We 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.*

*19We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.*

Our focus is to abide in Christ. Anyone who constantly abide in Him will be safe, and the evil one will not touch him. Such persons will speak, act according to the will of God, and will not fall into any sin. So, fix your eyes on Jesus that you may not stumble. Let us be drawn to that light of glory because the entire world is in the power of wicked one, the devil. The following verse can be a good conclusion for this sermon!

## Conclusion:

### **1 John 2:1,2.**

*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;  
2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.*

Pray according to the Spirit prompting. When He burdens you to pray for somebody, you pray for that person. Let there be total spontaneity in your prayer life. Then you will never go wrong!

We are called to pray and live for others. Not for our own personal interests always.

Never take just one passage and run with it!

**Daniel Israel**

**[pastor@acts242.org](mailto:pastor@acts242.org)**

**5 16 20**