

“Sin Not Leading to Death”

By Paul R. Blake

(Recently, a brother sent the following question) *“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. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death”* (1John 5:16-17). “What is the sin leading to death, and what is a sin not leading to death? Does this mean that only some sins cause condemnation while others do not?”

Answer: The meaning of 1John 5:16-17 is frequently discussed and debated among Christians; there is no full consensus on what it means. Some suppose that the sin against the Holy Ghost is intended; some that the phrase signifies any great and egregious sin, such as murder, idolatry, adultery; some that it denotes some sin that was punishable by death under the Law of Moses; some that it means a sin that subjected the offender to discipline by the church; some that it refers to sins which brought literal death on the offender, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira of Acts 5:1-11; some that it discusses crimes committed against civil law for which the offender is sentenced to death. There are many viewpoints, and they all cannot be right.

“A sin which is not unto death.” The great question in the interpretation of the whole passage is what is meant by the “sin unto death.” The Greek (*amartia prov yanaton*) means a sin which leads to death, for which spiritual death is the penalty if it continues in its course, just as an untreated disease can result in death for the sufferer.

There are two scriptural facts cannot be disputed regarding sin; and therefore, 1John 5:16-17 must be interpreted in light of these facts. First, any un-repent sin leads to spiritual death. If we do not repent of our sins and confess them, we will be lost. A sin that one does not repent of is a sin that leads to death.

“If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1John 1:6-9).

Second, some sins can lead to a person becoming reprobate, that is, he is debased by the sin to the point that the gospel no longer has any effect on him. That is why it is important to repent and confess sins quickly and abandon the practice of that sin, because it can take control of the heart and mind of the sinner. Any sin that destroys ones’ conscience and leads to more and greater sins is a sin that leads to death.

“For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: A dog returns to his own vomit, and, a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire” (2Peter 2:20-22). *“For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins”* (Heb. 10:26).

Therefore, a sin that does not lead to death is any sin that is abandoned, repented, confessed, and prayed for forgiveness. One is restored to fellowship and healthy spiritual life with God and does not die from the sin. A sin that leads to death is any sin that one refuses to repent of, or a sin that debases the heart and mind, blocks out the word of God, and leads to more sin. It is helpful and hopeful to pray for one who sins but repents and confesses in

humility. But for those who sin and refuse to repent and instead forge ahead into more sin, there is little purpose in praying for such a one. He has become reprobate.

There is a great personal warning in this for all disciples, especially for ourselves; that is, be humble and repent and none of our sins will end in death. Be proud and stubborn and all of our sins will lead to death.

“Cut It Down”

“You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD” (Lev. 19:18).

In his book, *Lee: The Last Years*, Charles B. Flood reports that after the Civil War, Robert E. Lee visited a Kentucky lady who took him to the remains of a grand old tree in front of her house. There she bitterly cried that its limbs and trunk had been destroyed by Federal Artillery fire. She looked to Lee for a word condemning the North or at least sympathizing with her loss. After a brief silence, Lee said, “Cut it down, my dear Madam, and forget it!” It is better to forgive the injustices of the past than to allow bitterness to take root and poison the rest of our lives.

Depending on the Belt

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen” (Jude 24-25).

Telephone-pole climbing is an art. In order to climb, one must have a belt that goes around the pole, and wear spiked shoes. The secret is to lean back and depend on the belt so the spikes can dig into the pole. Depending on the belt is hard to learn. Often a beginner slides down the splintery pole because he won't depend on his equipment. It only takes a few such experiences to convince the beginner that it is better to depend on the belt. In the Christian life, God wants us to climb by depending on Him. When we are hurt by splinters, we should recognize that they are reminders that we need to depend on His strength and loving protection. (From *1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*, p. 53)

A Moments Wisdom

--One of the first things a visitor notices in a backward, third world country is that the children are still obeying their parents.

--Good fathers make good sons.

--Very frequently, rich parents make poor parents.

--Some parents really bring their children up; others let them down.

--Out of the mouth of babes often come words the parents shouldn't have said in the first place.

--Parents who are always giving their children nothing but the best usually wind up with nothing but the worst.

--Sometimes when a man recalls the good old days, he's really thinking of his bad young days.

--One minute of patience, ten years of peace.

--A man is as big as the things that annoy him.