

So That You May Know

An Expository Study of the Epistle of **1 John 5:16&17**

Chapter 29- The Sin Unto Death

266 The Sin Unto Death- Part 6

WAOY Tuesday 10/21/08

Welcome again, my beloved in Jesus Christ. We're continuing our verse by verse "journey" through the Epistle of **1John**, and today we're going to continue to look at what John taught about "The Sin that is unto Death". So let's open our Bibles and read **1John 5:16&17** again together:

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.

Now over the last several broadcasts- we have been exploring just what John was talking about here when he mentions the sin that leads to death. And I told that that this is a very controversial passage in God's Word over which much debate has raged for many years.

And we saw last time that- in my opinion- based upon my own best honest research- there are only two possible answers to just what John meant when he used the term, "**sin that leads to death**" that doesn't contradict any other verse:

- A. John many have been talking about a sin that is unto *eternal* death as in the unpardonable sin of blaspheming the Holy Ghost as Jesus taught in **Matthew 12**
- B. John may have been talking about a sin that is unto *physical* death as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira as Luke recorded for us in **The Acts 5**.

And we have gone over in great length about the first possibility and

today I want to look at the second possible meaning of the term, “sin that leads to death” that John used here and that is that the Apostle was actually talking about a sin that is unto a *physical* death rather than an *eternal* death. So I want to turn to **The Acts 5** and let’s read verses 1-14 together:

1 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, **2** and kept back *some* of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet.

3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back *some* of the price of the land?"

4 "While it remained *unsold*, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

5 And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it.

6 The young men got up and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him.

7 Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

8 And Peter responded to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?" And she said, "Yes, that was the price."

9 Then Peter *said* to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out *as well*."

10 And immediately she fell at his feet and breathed her last, and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

11 And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things.

12 At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico.

13 But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem.

14 And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to *their number*,

Now whatever you want to make of this passage- we have to agree on three things:

1. This event actually happened. The Scriptures are inspired and so everything that they say is true. So these two people- both husband and wife were instantly judged by God right in the Church because of secret sin in their life.
2. This judgment happened in the New Testament Church *after* the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and was carried out under Grace and not Law.
3. The Church Service didn't stop when God took the life of two people right in the Church. And that fact gives us insight to the notion that instant Judgment for flagrant sin was not all that uncommon in the first century. People just didn't play around with God back then like they do today.

Now we can debate about whether or not Ananias and Sapphira were actually saved- but what is clear- is that they were *both* members of the Church. And we need to remember that it was a whole lot harder to be a member of the Christian Church back then than it is today because it was expected that members would actually walk with God and faithfully attend the services back then and all that is really expected from members today is that they give money.

We must understand, dear friends- that until about 1950- people staying out of Church on an ongoing basis was considered to be grounds for revoking membership unless that person was out of town or dying or very sick. The leaders of the church for many centuries reasoned to themselves that if a person was truly saved- then he wants to go to Church and saved people don't want to miss Church Services. And so people rode to church with other people; they walked rather than stay home. And that is because the Bible doesn't allow for CEF & W Christians. Now you may have met some of those CEF &W believers. Those are the people who only go to Church at Christmas, Easter, Funerals, or Weddings- and we should never try to give those people any comfort at all that they are saved.

Listen, you certainly don't have to be in Church to be saved. I wasn't saved in a Church. I was saved at Milner Football Stadium on a Friday night- back on June 25, 1971. And I would think that most people are probably not saved inside the Church. And that is because the Church is not for lost people. The Church of Jesus Christ is for saved people to gather together to worship God and edify one another. Now that doesn't mean that lost people can't visit the Church- they can and we should invite them- but we have to understand, dear friends, that in their heart of hearts a lost person doesn't want to go to Church any more than a criminal wants to go to the police station.

So that is why we need to be busy *outside* the doors of the Church- with our neighbors; at the nursing homes; in the Hospitals, on the streets; at work; at the stores; in the schools; in the market place- preaching and teaching and praying and witnessing and living and telling lost people about Jesus. And we must do all of that *outside* the Church because that is where the sinners are.

And I don't want to get too deep into this today- but in the Bible- when Christianity was being defined and established during the days of the Bible- all evangelism was done *outside* the Church- never inside the Church. What you have outside the Church is evangelism so that sinners are saved and then because they are saved- they will leave the comfort of their own individual homes and they will gather together in a public place for the purpose of worshipping the God Who graciously saved them and of being edified by the Word of God through the Power of the Spirit so they can live godly lives and so that people will see their good works and glorify their Father Who is in Heaven.

And so what you have *outside* the Church is evangelism and what you have *inside* the Church is worship; edification; and judgment.

So let me say here clearly that going to Church doesn't make anybody a Christian any more than going to McDonald's makes you a hamburger or than sitting in your garage makes you an automobile.

Sitting in a pew and tipping God a quarter and hearing a sermon and singing songs and then going home and living exactly the same way that you lived before you went to Church is not Christianity, dear friends. But sadly- that is what Christianity has become and that is wrong.

Now I didn't go to Church before I was saved because I was lost and I didn't love God and couldn't have cared less about God. I didn't read

my Bible; I didn't pray; and I didn't desire to love and serve Jesus. That is precisely what it means to be lost, dear friends-. No lost person desires those things.

I thought that going to Church was stupid and only for weak people who couldn't handle life and needed a crutch. But since I was strong and I knew everything and I was a nice guy- I didn't think I needed God- thank you very much.

Now I said that and you heard me say that. But now there is a flip side to that Truth that I just said. While it is true that going to Church does not save anyone- it is also true that saved people will go to Church. Lost sinners are justified by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone and going to Church doesn't qualify as either Grace or Faith. But going to Church is the correct and biblical and obedient and loving response that already saved people have to what God has done for us through Jesus Christ.

In other words- the action of going to Church does not cause God to be obligated to forgive and save you. But for saved people to stay out of Church and withhold their fellowship with other believers proves that you either are not saved or else you don't believe that saved people should walk in humble obedience to the Word of God because the Bible teaches that truly born again people do not forsake the assembling of ourselves together.

People give me excuses all the time as to why they don't go to Church. And most of the time I try very hard to hear them out and after they have given me the benefit of their great wisdom and all their excuses- I respond to what they said.

Some say, *"I don't need to go to Church because I already believe."* But that statement shows a glaring lack of understanding that going to Church is not just about your own personal belief. Going to Church is about humble submission to the Authority of the Word of God and it is also about the corporate testimony that people believe that God's Will is more important than their own. When you see more cars in the parking lot of the football stadium on Sunday than in the Church parking lot- you know that men love themselves and love pleasure more than they love Jesus. By giving up our own personal rights and dreams and living our lives as bought and paid for bond slaves- we testify to the lost world that God is more important than we are.

Others tell me that the reason that the reason they don't go to Church is because of all the hypocrites that are in the Church. And I always encourage them to come on anyway- because they are Justas hypocritical as the ones they're talking about- and we always have room for one more hypocrite. Also I notice that Wal-Mart has hypocrites who shop there too- but I notice that that doesn't stop them from shopping at Wal-Mart.

So what we have are really very lame excuses to mask the fact that either these people are not truly saved in the first place or else they are living in abject rebellion to the Word of God and either one is real bad.

For over 20 centuries being a member of the Church meant that you were a Blood washed; Spirit filled; Born Again; devil hating; sin resisting slave to Jesus and you lived your life in humble obedience to the Word of God. Only in our day has that definition been altered to include anybody that the dog drags in through the front door.

And so true believers in the Church that Jesus built wanted to serve God and so they welcomed personal examination and they welcomed exhortation and they welcomed judgment so that they would not be condemned with the world.

Well, I have to stop right here, but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our journey through the Epistle of **1John**. May God help us all.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.