



the Lord so that they may be forgiven because God is able to save to the uttermost—even those who have abandoned Him altogether (cf. Heb. 7:25; Rom. 11:17-24).

he be removed from among them, and to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh (cf. 1 Cor. 5:1-5). Does this mean we are forbidden to pray for their repentance as well? Certainly not! We should most definitely and fervently pray that they return to

Let us be diligent, brethren, that we are never counted among those of whom it said **“it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them”** (cf. 2 Pet. 2:20-21). Let us remember that **“all unrighteousness is sin”** whose wages is death if we do not repent, and that all who have been **“born of God do not keep on sinning”** (1 Jn. 5:17-18 ESV).



Faithful Sayings Issue 14.7 February 12, 2012

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ISSUE

14.7

BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

February 12
2012

Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM
10:20 AM
6:00 PM
Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Kyle Pope

Deacons:

Dean Bowers
Eddie Cook
Bill Davis
Steve Dixon
Pat Goguen
Jack Langley
Neil Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Walker McAnear
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott

Evangelists:

Kyle Pope
Jason Garcia



Sin Leading to Death

By Jason Garcia

The Holy Spirit inspired John to write some of the simplest, most beautiful sentiments in all of God’s Word. His gospel contains the most recognizable and concise expression of God’s love for the world, and offers a unique perspective of our Savior. John is often referred to as the “apostle of love” or, as in Scripture, **“the disciple whom Jesus loved”** (cf. Jn. 21:20-24). Indeed, this disciple had much to say regarding our love for one another, admonishing us to reflect the love of our Lord in our own lives that he, no doubt, personally witnessed. However, if we look closely at John’s writing, he will impress us with his unflinching, unapologetic rebuke of sinful behavior even amidst his well-known, inspired teachings on love. We should add that our Lord, too, was unyielding in His efforts to hold people accountable, and rebuked them accordingly with forceful language. So John, in the Spirit of his Master, writes:

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. (1 Jn. 5:16-17 NASB)



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The language, as it's translated in the NASB, can be somewhat misleading but, nevertheless, captures the essence of John's original words. We should note that the author does not have in mind one specific sin that would lead someone to death; rather "there is sin" (Gr. *estin hamartia*) in the aggregate, cumulative sense that ends in death. Why does John make the distinction between two classes of sin, especially in light of Paul's teaching that **"the wages of sin is death"** which indicates no distinction (Rom. 6:23)? How are we to understand this instruction that forbids one to ask God's forgiveness on behalf of another, and know when to apply the command? The Scripture holds the answer, so let us turn to it with open hearts and minds.

First, we must establish which "death" John has in mind: physical, spiritual, or both? Avid Bible students offer a range of explanations but, ultimately, the context of our passage must determine the "death" John intends to be understood. In our immediate context, one who **"has the Son"** is one who **"has life"** and this life is eternal (1 Jn. 5:11-12). Conversely, then, the "death" in the preceding verses must be *spiritual* or *eternal* death. This interpretation corresponds with the pervading trend of the epistle that eternal life or death is contingent upon fellowship with God's Son (cf. 1 Jn. 3:14-15).

So, what is the sin that leads to eternal death? Would not all sin inevitably lead us to eternal separation from

God (cf. Is. 59:1-2)? Absolutely, and we must be ever vigilant to identify, rebuke, and guard against transgressing God's Law. When we do sin in moments of weakness, then we must immediately confess and repent of that sin, praying for forgiveness. When we do so, God, who is loving and faithful, will forgive His children of their shortcomings (cf. 1 Jn. 1:8-9). So, the sin of which John speaks cannot be classed among the sins for which we are to pray for forgiveness, and this is where John draws the second distinction—sins for which we should not ask forgiveness for on behalf of others. Sadly, there are those who **"have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come"** that **"go on SINNING WILLFULLY after receiving the knowledge of the truth"** (Heb. 6:4-5; 10:26 emphasis mine). These, I am convinced, are the people John and the Hebrew writer have in mind—those who go on "sinning willfully" without remorse and blatantly, overtly reject the Savior who redeemed them. We cannot in good conscience pray for their forgiveness when they **"again crucify to themselves the Son of God"** and have trampled Him under foot, and have regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified, and have insulted the

Spirit of grace (Heb. 6:6; 10:29). Those who forsake Christ after having known Him are indeed committing sin that leads to death, for there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but only a fearful expectation of eternal punishment (cf. Heb. 10:26). In short, these sins are not from moments of weakness but are "open manifestations of a character alienated from God" (Vincent, Vincent's Word Studies).

Rather than pray for the forgiveness of one in such a state, God has outlined a different plan. Take as an example the man in Corinth who, in the time of Paul's writing, was living shamelessly and openly in sin without remorse. Paul's instruction to the church in Corinth was to mourn for such a one, that