

THE SIN UNTO DEATH

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1 John 5:16, 17, "If any man see his brother sin a sin, which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death; THERE IS A SIN UNTO DEATH; I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not unto death."

There is a balance of truth, and sometimes we can emphasize one aspect of truth to the neglect of another, equally important, aspect of truth, and we give people an entirely wrong impression. The Bible teaches very clearly---as clearly as language can make it---that the child of God is eternally secure in Him, and that there is nothing in this world that can separate him from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

In Romans, chapter eight, verses thirty-five through thirty-nine, Paul list all sorts of things---everything the mind can imagine---and shows that none of those things can separate the child of God from the love of God. There is no possibility that any child of God will lose what God has prepared for him in heaven. There is no possibility that anything will ever separate one of his from his love.

But it is possible, and it very often does happen, that a child of God loses everything that is worth having THIS SIDE OF THE GRAVE. He will not lose anything that is on the other side; but it is possible for the child of God to lose everything that is worth having in this life.

Sometimes a person can tell the truth, and yet tell it in such manner as to give people an entirely false impression from what he said. Sometimes, in talking about the security of the child of God, we state that doctrine in such a **way** that people get a wrong idea as to what we are saying. Sometimes we say it this way. I have said it this way; I try not to say it this way any more, but I have said it in the past. Sometimes we say that if the child of God does not walk in the pathway of obedience, if he does not believe the truth, and abide in the truth, he will not lose his home in eternal heaven; **ALL HE LOSES** is the joys and benefits of this life. Well, that statement is true. If a child of God does not walk in the pathway of obedience, he does not lose anything in eternal heaven; all he loses is the joys and benefits that would have been his in this life.

But when we phrase it in that way, I am afraid that we leave the impression that that is not very much to lose. I think it is better if we say that what the disobedient child of God loses is EVERYTHING THAT IS WORTH HAVING THIS SIDE OF THE GRAVE. We do not stand to lose our home in that eternal city; but we do stand to lose ever so much, and in this booklet, I would like for us to look at some things that the Bible says about that.

In this passage John says that "if any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death." He goes on to say that "there is a sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for it." very nearly all of my life, I have heard people wrestle with the question, "What is the sin unto death?" I believe the Bible makes it clear enough, and if the Lord will assist me, I would like for us to notice what the Bible says about that subject.

Generally, when you mention the sin unto death, somebody wants to identify a particular offense, and say, "This sin is the sin unto death." Somebody says the sin of adultery is the sin unto death. Somebody else says the sin of fornication, or the sin of murder, or some other heinous offense is the sin unto death. Now those are wicked sins, and we could spend the entire time talking about what terrible sins those are, and the great consequences that they bring upon the child of God. But when the apostle says that "there is a sin unto death," He is not talking about any particular, nameable offense, such as adultery, fornication, drunkenness, murder, and so on. He says that "there is A sin unto death," but in the next verse he goes on to say, "There is A sin not unto death." Do you see, if you try to narrow that sin unto death down to JUST ONE NAMEABLE OFFENSE, you are, by your own argument, left with JUST ONE OFFENSE that is not unto death, and I don't know anybody who believes that.

Well, before we go any farther, what is that sin unto death that John was talking about? It is simply this: THE SIN UNTO DEATH IS ANY OFFENSE THAT YOU COMMIT---THAT YOU PERSIST IN---UNTIL GOD TOTALLY, AND FINALLY, AND IRREVERSIBLY CUTS YOU OFF FROM THE JOYS AND BENEFITS THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN YOURS IN THIS LIFE IN SUCH MANNER THAT THERE IS NO REVERSAL, NO REINSTATEMENT, AND YOU WILL NEVER AGAIN, FROM THAT DAY FORWARD, ENJOY WHAT YOU MIGHT HAVE ENJOYED HAD YOU WALKED IN THE PATHWAY OF OBEDIENCE. And we will notice in just a few pages, if the Lord will bless us that that offense, very often, is something that you might not have expected it to be. Let me say it again. What is the sin unto death? It is any offense in which you persist---which you continue in---until God totally, finally, and irreversibly cuts you off, and sets you adrift---as far as this world is concerned---so

that there is no prospect, no hope, no possibility, that you will ever again be restored to the joy that you might have had here in this life. You are still a child of God. Heaven is still your home. God chose you; Christ died for you; he has quickened you by his Spirit from a state of death in sin to a state of life in Christ Jesus---and yet you have made shipwreck of your life---and there is no possibility that you will ever have what you might otherwise have had.

The Lord gives us several illustrations of that. Matt. 21:18-20, "Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered, and when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee from henceforth forever, and presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away." Now bear in mind that this was a good plant, a good tree. A good tree brings forth good fruit. A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit. So this tree was capable of bringing forth good fruit. THIS TREE IS SYMBOLIC OF A CHILD OF GOD, WHO IS NOT BEARING THE FRUIT THAT HE OUGHT TO BEAR. The Lord hungered, he looked for food on this tree, he came to it, and found no fruit thereon, but leaves only, and he said unto it, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforth, FOREVER." Now bear in mind that it was a good tree. It was capable of bearing good fruit. It did not; The judgment of God fell upon it, and let me ask you: How long do you believe that it is going to be until this tree bears good fruit?

"Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward FOREVER." That is long enough, is it not? NEVER AGAIN WILL THIS TREE BEAR THE FRUIT THAT IT MIGHT HAVE BORNE. This tree might at one time have borne that fruit, but now the judgment of God rests upon it, because it did not bear fruit, and now, there is no possibility that this tree will ever again be the fruitful tree that it might have been.

Let's look at another illustration. In the twenty-fifth chapter, of Matthew, beginning at the fourteenth verse, "The kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods." You remember the story. There were three servants. To one servant he delivered five talents, to another servant, two talents, and to another servant one talent. The man with five talents went out and worked with them, and doubled what he had. He gained five talents. The man with two talents went out, and with what he had to work with, he did the same thing. He doubled what he had. He gained two talents. Not all of us have the same capacity. God does not require me to use your talent. All God requires me to do is to do the best I can with what I have to work with. And that man with two talents did just as well as the man with five talents. He just did not have as much to work with. But the man with one talent "went and hid his talent in the earth," and

when his Lord came back he challenged him. You remember the Lord commended those other two servants, and gave the same commendation to the man with two talents as he did to the man with five talents. But then in verse twenty-four he which had received the one talent came and said, "Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sowed, and gathering where thou hast not strawed, and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth, lo, there thou hast what is thine. His Lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed; thou oughtest, therefore, to have put my money to the exchangers, and then, at my coming, I should have received mine own with usury. Take, therefore, the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents, for unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance, but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And he cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth."

Notice that these were ALL SERVANTS OF THE SAME LORD. They all had talents given them from the same Lord. They all had the ability, according to their own capacity, to serve their Lord. The man with one talent could not do as much as the man with five talents, but he could have done just like the man with two talents. He could have used what he had. But he did not use it, and he lost it. Let me ask you again, what do you believe was the prospect that his Lord would ever give him another talent. What do you think is the prospect that his Lord will say, "Okay, you have had one probation; you missed out that time, but I am going to give you another chance." What do you think is the likelihood of that? It is not going to happen, is it? He was cast out into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. These were all three servants of the same Lord. They all had talents with which they could have served their Lord.

Now once more, in John, chapter fifteen, I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine; ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me, ye can do nothing." Now let me ask you: is this talking to children of God, or is it talking to dead alien sinners? It is talking to children of God, is it not? He says, "I am the vine, and ye are the branches." The dead alien sinner is not a branch in Christ Jesus. This is talking to the Lord's children. Now notice verse six, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and MEN cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Is that

talking about eternal damnation? It is not men that cast anyone away into that terrible place. But notice that it is men that cast these people into the fire. Sometimes that happens by a vote in conference in church. "Men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

Now it does not always happen that the person is turned out of the church. I have known some people who were in the condition that is described in these verses, who stayed in the church the rest of their lives. They never did anything so outward, so obvious, that they would ever be dealt with by the church, and yet, their joy was gone. Everything they had ever experienced was gone. It had been gone for years. There was no spiritual joy about them, and yet, they stayed right there in the church, and, sometimes, were the most insistent on making all the decisions. That becomes a problem in the church, when that happens. But that is another story, and I do not want to get sidetracked on that. I have another theme I want to follow at this moment.

"If a man abide not in me (that is one of the branches in him) he is cast forth as a branch and is withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. Again, the same question we asked awhile ago: after this branch is cast into the fire and burned, what do you believe are the prospects that that branch will ever be put back in the vine, and bear fruit in the vine. That is a ridiculous question, isn't it. NONE WHATSOEVER.

If a person is born of the Spirit of God there is nothing in all of this world that is going to separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. David said it in Psalms chapter eighty nine, "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with the rod and their iniquities with stripes, nevertheless, my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from them, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the word that goeth forth out of my mouth." He deals very clearly with the eternal security of the child of God. There is nothing in this world that can separate the child of God from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, but the child of God can so persist in sin, and go on, and on, until he loses everything that is worth having here in this life.

We talk about a person losing the joy of his salvation. He can do that. He loses the joy of the church, the joy of the gospel. He wonders why the preacher cannot preach the way he used to preach. He allows, "That preacher used to go to the pulpit every Sunday morning and he would just set this place on fire, but he just can't preach like that any more." Perhaps the preacher preaches as well as ever. **MAYBE THE MAN CANNOT LISTEN** the way he used to. **HE CANNOT HEAR** the way he used to hear.

A person stands to lose the joy of the church, his home in the church, his job, his family, his children, his home, his health, and, perhaps, even his sanity. There is no end to the things that a person stands to lose---this side of the grave. You will never lose what God has waiting on you on the other side. But I am sure that some of you can think of someone you have known very well. There is no doubt in your mind that he is a child of God. You have been with him in church. You have seen him rejoice under the preaching of the gospel, and you cannot doubt that he is born of the Spirit of God. And yet, today, he has made shipwreck of his life. You can supply the name. Everybody knows somebody who fits that pattern. He has lost the joy of his salvation; he has lost the joy of the church; he has lost his home in the church; he lost his wife; his children will not talk to him; he lost his job; he lost his business; he lost his home; he lost his health; and perhaps, lost his sanity. He lost everything worth having---this side of the grave. The text says, "Men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." **THERE IS NO POSSIBILITY THAT THOSE BRANCHES WILL EVER AGAIN BE PUT BACK TOGETHER AND PUT BACK IN THE VINE TO BEAR FRUIT HERE IN THIS LIFE.**

Heb. 6:1-6, "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." I believe it is clear enough that he is talking about a child of God. He says that if that person shall fall away, it is impossible to renew him again to repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. That is still talking about that branch that was cut off and cast into the fire. It is talking about that fig tree to which the Lord said, "Let no fruit grow on thee from henceforth forever." It is talking about that one talent servant whose talent was taken away and who was cast out into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Paul says that **IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO RENEW SUCH A PERSON TO REPENTANCE.**

Somebody may want to know, "But what if he decides to repent?" **HE CANNOT DO IT.** It is not possible for him to repent. A person cannot repent just any time he decides to. **IF GOD DOES NOT GIVE REPENTANCE YOU CANNOT REPENT.** 2 Tim. 2:25, "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will **GIVE THEM REPENTANCE** to the acknowledging of the truth." Acts 11:18,

"When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles GRANTED REPENTANCE unto life." Rom. 2:4, "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God LEADETH THEE TO REPENTANCE?" The one text says that God gives repentance, the next text says that he grants repentance, and the last text says that he leads to repentance. If God does not give repentance, if he does not grant it, if he does not lead you to it---you cannot repent.

You cannot just wake up one morning, after you have lived for a long time in a bad way, and say, "Hey, I just believe I will repent today. I believe I will change my way. I am going to turn over a new leaf. I am going to start doing better." It does not work that way. Now the religious world thinks you can do that. They think that is all there is to it. But they are wrong. You cannot just wake up one morning and decide, "I am going to do better." If God does not give repentance, you will never repent. If he does not grant repentance, if he does not lead you to repentance, you cannot repent. The text says that it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance. You can talk to him all you want to, but you will never get him to repent. He cannot repent. It is not within his capacity.

Heb 10:26, For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." This person is left WITHOUT CONSCIOUSNESS OF A HOPE in Christ Jesus. "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." What state is he in? Here it is. "But a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." He is a child of God, and he will live in heaven some day, but he feels none of the power of that hope in his heart. All that is there is fear, that fear of indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden the Son of God under foot, and counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace." Now Paul is telling us about something that is worse (a "sorer punishment") than death. What is worse than death? It is for a child of God to be cut off and be in the condition we have been talking about. That is what is worse than death.

Sometimes we talk about what a harsh thing the law of Moses was. And the Law of Moses was a harsh system. But for a person to be stoned to death was really a less punishment than to be left here in this life, cut off---completely cut off---from the joys and the benefits that he might otherwise have had. "Of how much sorer punishment suppose ye shall he be counted worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified an unholy

thing."

"The blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified...." Is that talking about a dead alien sinner? It does not sound like it. Those who will one day suffer eternally are not sanctified by the blood of the covenant. He "counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace, for we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompence, saith the Lord, and again, The Lord shall judge HIS PEOPLE." This is talking about his people. If there was ever any doubt, that should remove all doubt. Verse 31, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

II Pet. 1:5, "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue, and to virtue, knowledge, and to knowledge, temperance, and to temperance, patience, and to patience, godliness, and to godliness, brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, charity, for if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, but he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and HATH FORGOTTEN THAT HE WAS PURGED FROM HIS OLD SINS." It does not mean that those sins are still charged against him. The Lord put those sins away at Calvary, and he "hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. (10:14). But the man in this condition is BLIND; he "cannot see afar off," and he has "FORGOTTEN that was purged from his old sins." He does not have that witness within his heart.

I was talking with a man a few years ago. I stopped at the place where he was working, and visited with him for just a moment, and in the course of the conversation he said, "Brother Hunt, I just don't get a thing in the world out of the church any more." Now he was there every Sunday, and, for that matter, he makes all the decisions, ninety per cent of them, anyway. But he said, "Brother Hunt, I just don't get a thing out of the church any more." He said, "I think, perhaps, I have gotten too old to enjoy the church." He is just a little older than I am, and at that time he was about the same age I am today. But, anyway, he thought he was too old to enjoy the church. That is sad, isn't it? But, oh, how many children of God are in exactly that same condition. They are blind; they cannot see afar off, and they have forgotten that they were purged from their old sins.

I would like for us to notice two characters the Bible talks about, who were in that condition. II Pet. 2:15, 16, "Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, but was rebuked for his iniquity, the dumb ass speaking with man's voice, forbad the madness of the prophet." That is talking about Balaam, a prophet in

the Old Testament. Balaam is one of the most mysterious characters in the Bible. And one of the reasons that he is so mysterious is because he behaved himself in such a manner that, sometimes, it is difficult to tell whether he was a child of God or not. But I believe that when we look at him closely, that the Bible makes it clear enough that he was a born again character. Listen to the way Balaam talks in the book of Numbers. In Numbers, chapter 23, beginning with verse 8. Balak had called for him to come and to curse Israel, and he wanted to do that. Balak had promised him all kinds of wealth if he would curse Israel. Balak was afraid of Israel. Balak said, in verse seven, "Come and curse me Jacob, and come defy Israel." And then in verse eight, Balaam replied, "How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed, or shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied, for from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him, lo the people shall dwell alone and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and number the fourth part of Israel, Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

Do you remember how Jacob died? Jacob died in his own bed, in his right mind, with his family all around him, with his mind on the Lord, and he was talking about the Lord and his goodness. Balaam said that when he came to die, that was how he wanted to die---in his own bed, in his right mind, with his family all around him, and with his mind on the Lord. Does that sound like a dead alien sinner to you? It does not sound like a dead alien sinner to me. One that wants to die with his mind on the Lord bears evidence of an experience of grace.

And in verse nineteen of that same chapter, he says, "God is not a man that he should lie, neither the Son of man that he should repent, hath he said, and shall he not do it, or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Balaam had more light on Bible doctrine, and he manifested more light in that one verse of scripture than ninety-nine per cent of the religious people, and the religious leaders in America today. He does not sound like a dead alien sinner to me. "God is not a man that he should lie, neither the Son of man that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it, or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

And in chapter twenty-four, verse seventeen, "I shall see him but not now, I shall behold him, but not nigh, there shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth." Some two thousand years later there were wise men from the East, who saw the star that signalled the arrival of the King of Israel---the arrival of the Lord Jesus Christ. They saw that star and they went to Bethlehem searching for the Christ child. I have heard it said that they saw that star and then followed it to Bethlehem. They did not do that, they followed it to Nazareth. They did not have to follow that star to

Bethlehem; they had the prophecy of Micah, "And thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel" (Mic. 5:2). They saw that star and they went directly to Bethlehem. Why did they know that that star signalled the arrival of the King of Israel? Why did they know that that star signalled the arrival of the Savior? It was because they had read this prophecy of Balaam. They had read this text from Numbers, chapter twenty four, when Balaam said, "There shall come a STAR out of Jacob and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel." Two thousand years later, after Balaam had prophesied that that star would appear, it did appear; the wise men saw it, they knew that the time of the Messiah was at hand; and they went to Bethlehem, seeking for the Lord.

I believe the Bible gives proof enough to show that Balaam was a child of God. The wicked do not talk the way Balaam talked; they do not pray the way Balaam prayed. Balaam prayed, wanting to "die the death of the righteous." He said, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." But let us go to chapter thirty-one, verse eight, "Balaam also, the son of Beor, they slew with the sword." When the Bible gets around to recording the death of Balaam, it records it almost as a footnote, as if to say, "Oh, by the way, Balaam was killed in the battle too." What happened to Balaam? What happened was that Balak offered him money if he would curse Israel, and he tried to curse Israel, and he could not do it. Balak made the offer again, and Balaam tried again to curse Israel, and he still could not do it. And Balak made the offer the third time, and Balaam tried to curse Israel the third time, and he still wound up promising blessing upon Israel.

But let us go to the Revelation. "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication," Rev. 2:14. Balaam tried to curse Israel, and he could not. He said, "I cannot curse those whom the Lord has blessed." But, do you see, he had seen Balak's money, and if there was any way he could earn that money, he wanted to do it. But he had discovered that God would not allow him to curse his people. Now, Balaam was also a crafty man in a natural way. And he finally went to Balak and said, "Balak, I have got it all figured out; God has blessed Israel, and I cannot curse them, but here is what you can do: if you will send bad women down there, you can get Israel in trouble with their God." He taught Israel to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. He says, "I cannot curse them; God has blessed them, and I cannot undo it, but if you will send enough bad women down there, and get Israel to misbehave, and to offer sacrifice to strange gods, you can get them in trouble with their God, and bring the wrath of God on them." He earned his pay, but he lost

everything.

I hear a text over in Matthew, where the Lord says, "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Matt. 16:28). He did not lose his eternal destiny, but he lost everything that was worth here having in this life. The scriptures tell us. "In patience possess ye your souls." Balaam did not do it. Balaam sold out. I am convinced that Balaam was a child of God, and I expect to see him someday. A man that talked the way he talked sounds like a child of God to me, and I expect that some day I shall see him there in the glory world. But he lost everything that was worth having here in this life. He said, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." That did not happen. He wound up in battle against the people of God, and he died fighting against Israel.

Have you ever seen it? Have you ever seen a child of God, who sold out, and died, fighting against the very cause that he had, at one time, supported? Sure you have. It happened to Balaam.

In First Samuel, chapter ten, verse six, Samuel was talking to Saul, who was about to become king over Israel. And he says to Saul, "And the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy unto them, and shalt be TURNED INTO ANOTHER MAN. And it was so, that when he turned his back to go from Samuel, GOD GAVE HIM ANOTHER HEART." It does not sound to me like it is talking about a dead alien sinner. He said, "Thou shalt be turned into another man," and he said, "God gave him another heart." What is it that happens in regeneration? God takes out that hard and stony heart, and gives a heart of flesh. Even though he was a big man physically, he was small in his own sight. He was a very humble man, a very self-effacing person. But he became king, and, as we say, it went to his head, and he was not able to handle it, and he became lifted up in pride. One time he endeavored to perform the office of the priest, because the priest did not get there on time. He tried to do the priest's job for him. That got him in trouble. He did not have any business trying to take the priest's job. And from there on it was downhill.

But, anyway, Samuel sent him to destroy the nation of Amalek. Do you remember? Amalek had stood against Israel, when Israel came into land of Canaan? Now God would send Israel to destroy the nation of Amalek. And he was commanded to destroy the entire nation---just wipe them off the face of the earth. There were reasons for that, which we don't have time to get into, but suffice it to say that, because of their immoral life style, as people would say nowadays, because of the way they lived, they were just absolutely riddled with disease, and God was intending to use Israel, like a surgeon's scalpel to remove that diseased flesh from the human race. That is as far as we need to

go with that. But, anyway, God intended for that entire nation to be destroyed, to be wiped off the face of the earth. You remember the story. Saul did not do that. He saved the king, Agag, and the best of the cattle alive. And then, when Samuel arrived, Samuel asked Saul, "Have you done what you were supposed to do?" "Yes, I have done just exactly what I was told to do." And Samuel wants to know, "Well, if you have, what meaneth, this lowing of the cattle in mine ears?" "Be sure your sin will find you out." Samuel says, "I hear cattle lowing over on the other side of the hill. What is that commotion, if you have destroyed all of Amalek, and all their livestock?" And you remember that Saul tries to blame it on the people. But, we don't have time to get into all of that. But in verse twenty-two, "And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft." The Amalekites were involved in witchcraft, and Saul was telling Samuel, "You are not a bit better than they are. Your rebellion is just like their rebellion." Witchcraft was a part of their national religion. He says, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry, because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king." Verse twenty-six, "And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee, FOR THE LORD HATH REJECTED THEE from being king over Israel. And as Samuel turned to go away, he laid of hold the skirt of his mantle, and it rent, and Samuel said unto him, The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine, that is better than thou. And also the strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent, for he is not a man that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it, or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good."

I doubt that it is really a coincidence that Samuel winds up saying almost identically the same words that Balaam had said hundreds of years before. "The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent, for he is not a man that he should repent."

Verse thirty-five, "And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death. Nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul, and the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel." Now notice one thing in the first verse of the next chapter. "And the Lord said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel?" Two things I want to notice. What do you believe was the likelihood that Saul would ever again be the king of Israel? None whatsoever. He had lost it. It was gone. His rejection was total, and complete, and irreversible.

One other thing I want to notice. He says, "HOW LONG WILT THOU MOURN FOR SAUL, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel?" Do you remember another expression very similar to that? The verse we started out with said, "There is a

sin unto death; I DO NOT SAY THAT YE SHALL PRAY FOR IT." God said to Samuel, "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul; it won't do you you any good." "There is a sin unto death; I do not say that ye shall pray for it." Now that fits too well for it to be wrong. That is exactly what he is talking about. He says, "There is a sin unto death; I do not say that ye shall pray for it." And here he says, "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from being king over Israel."

In the book of First Corinthians, chapter nine, verse twenty-seven, Paul the apostle says, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest, by any means, after I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." What was Paul afraid of? Was he afraid he was going to lose his home in heaven? No. Paul made that plain enough. I don't know any way language could make it any plainer than Paul made it. Paul made that as plain as it could be, that if one is chosen of God, redeemed by him, and born of his Spirit, that he is heaven-bought, and heaven-born, and heaven-bound. and nothing in this world, past, present, or future, above us, or below us, or angels, or principalities, or powers, life, death, or anything else can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:38, 39). What was he afraid of? He was afraid that he would wind up like Balaam. He was afraid that he would wind up like King Saul. He said, because that could happen to him, he kept his body in subjection, "and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, after I have preached to others, I myself might be a castaway."

I have known people to make shipwreck of their life. We have all seen that, at one time or another. And, sometimes, after a person has just made total shipwreck of his life, somebody else will square his shoulders, and say, "Well, I will tell you, right now, I will never be guilty of anything of any such thing as that." I don't know that; and you don't know that. It behooves every last one of us to be constantly on our knees, begging God that God would give us grace to survive. and to persist, and to press on in his service. If Paul the apostle, as eminent a servant as he was, was concerned lest he himself should be castaway, certainly, it behooves Harold Hunt that I be constantly on my guard.

I would like for us to notice, just for a moment, two offenses that, I believe, are the most common offenses, that ever put a child of God in that particular condition. Now we know that a person can destroy his life by gross immoral conduct. We know that adultery, fornication, drunkenness, murder, debauchery, and the like will destroy a person's life. But, while we know that we are all at risk with regard to those things, generally, most of us are not very likely to commit any of those heinous offenses. Most children of God are not likely to fall into those sins. We stay on guard against those things. Now that is not to say that we are totally immune against those terrible

sins; I don't want to leave that impression. Oh, I would not, for a minute, leave that impression. But the thing I am pointing out is that the pitfall that you and I are most likely to get into is not nearly so much any of those things as it is some other things. There is much less likelihood that I will ever be guilty of robbing a bank than there is that I might fall into these offenses that we hear about in these next three texts. I believe that there are more children of God, who make shipwreck of their lives on these three rocks than on any other thing that ever besets any child of God.

Let's go back, for a moment, to those three examples we used a moment ago: the one talent servant, the barren fig tree, and the branch that did not bear fruit. Let me ask you: what was the offense of those three? They were all guilty of exactly the same offense. What was their offense? **THEIR OFFENSE WAS IN DOING ABSOLUTELY NOTHING.** Was that not their offense? Their offense was in doing nothing. And there are more children of God, who make shipwreck of their life in things that would never get you turned out of the church, than there are who make shipwreck of their lives in the great and heinous offenses. I want to notice three of them. We have noticed one already. There is, first of all, the great offense of doing absolutely nothing. And here are two others.

In Matthew, chapter six, the Lord is giving what we refer to as "the Lord's prayer." There are some folks who will tell you this is not the Lord's prayer; but that is not what I want to contend with at this moment. In verses fourteen and fifteen, after he has taught them how to pray, he says, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Notice that it is "your heavenly Father" if you forgive, and it is still "your Father," if you don't forgive. This is not talking about a person's eternal destiny. That person who is chosen, and redeemed, and born of the Spirit of God, is a child of God, and he will be in heaven some day. It is "your Father," if you forgive, and it is "your Father," if you do not forgive. But notice what we get into, when we transgress.

He says, "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." A few times in my life I have seen somebody so upset at another person that he would look the other person in the eye, trying to let him know how angry he was, and tell him, "I will never forgive you until the day you die." Did you ever hear anybody say that? It sends a cold chill over you, does it not? Just to think that anybody would say that. "I will never forgive you until the day you die." Let me ask you: if it sends a cold chill over you to hear somebody say that to somebody else, **THINK OF GOD SAYING THAT TO YOU.**

Imagine God saying to Harold Hunt, "Harold Hunt, you are my child, and I will have you with me in heaven one day, but as far as this life is concerned, I will never forgive you until the day you die." That is what the text says. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, NEITHER WILL YOUR FATHER FORGIVE YOUR TRESPASSES."

There was no forgiveness for that barren fig tree. There was no possibility that the barren fig tree would ever bear another fig. There could be no forgiveness for that branch that was cast into the fire and burned. It could never be put together again. There was no forgiveness for that one talent servant, who lost his talent. It was gone, and he would never have it back again. Many a child of God has made shipwreck of his life. He persisted, and persisted, until finally, God said, "Enough."

There is a sin unto death. What is the sin unto death? It is any sin that you continue in, until God finally says, "Enough," and he cuts you off. And as far as this life is concerned, it is all over. I BELIEVE THERE HAVE BEEN MORE CHILDREN OF GOD WHO GOT INTO THAT CONDITION BECAUSE OF MALICE, BECAUSE OF AN UNFORGIVING SPIRIT, THAN, PROBABLY, FOR ANY OTHER REASON.

Somebody gets offended, and he says, "That is alright, I will bide my time, I will have my day, I will just sit here and pat my foot until my day comes. Just you watch, my day will come; I will have the last laugh." And he persists, and persists with that malicious spirit. Perhaps, he would not do anything to the other person. He has too much judgment to strike out at the other person. Somebody would see him do that. He might chuckle if he passes by and sees him changing a flat tire in the rain and mud. But he would not overtly do anything to him. But he says, "I will watch; I will wait; I will have my day. Just you wait, I will have my day."

And finally, his day does come, and like Saul, or like Balaam, or like the barren fig tree, God says to him, "Enough," and as far as this life is concerned, it is all over. And that judgment is irreversible. There will never again be for him that joy that he could have had. It is all over. HE WILL NEVER REPENT, BECAUSE HE CANNOT REPENT.

Now he may come to church every meeting time for the rest of his life. He may be very active in the church. And once in awhile he may get some sort of satisfaction from the church. He does get some benefit from the good company. He knows the people at the church; he grew up with them; he has known them all his life, and he likes their company. So he goes to church. He is ashamed not to. He cannot feel anything, but he enjoys being with them. Perhaps, before he got in that shape the

church may have let him make most of the decisions, so he still gets to make most of the decisions. Perhaps, they do not realize what has happened to him. But he still cannot feel anything. It is all gone. It is over with.

I have the idea that, probably, most of the trouble in our churches has come from people in that condition, who stay right in the church. They have no spiritual joy at all. It is all gone. They have no spiritual discernment whatsoever, but they are still bound and determined to keep everybody else in line.

I believe that there have probably been more people, who got in trouble, because of a spiteful, malicious spirit than any other thing.

And there is another text that goes with that thought. Matt. 18:6, "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones, which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." How very careful we ought to be with regard to the Lord's little ones. And that is not always one that is young in age. It may be one that is advanced in years. "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones, that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

We noticed a text a few moments ago that talked about that same thing. Heb. 10: 28, 29, "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: OF HOW MUCH SORER PUNISHMENT, suppose ye shall he be counted worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? Paul says that there is something worse than death---a sorer punishment than to be stoned to death under Moses' law, and this text says the same thing. This text says that he would be better off dead---he would be better off if he was drowned in the depth of the sea.

A few times I have heard somebody say that some person would be better off dead. I am sure that you have probably heard somebody say that. It is a terrifying statement, is it not? But this is God talking, and if God says it, it is right. I have heard people make that statement, when I did not think they were right; but when God says it, you can be sure that is the way it is. And he says that this person would be better off dead. I would hate for God to say that Harold Hunt would be better off dead. But that is what he says about this character.

But what got him into this condition? Was he guilty of some heinous offense

that would get him turned out of the church? No, he was guilty of offending one of the Lord's little ones. "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones, which believe in me, IT WERE BETTER FOR HIM THAT A MILLSTONE WERE HANGED ABOUT HIS NECK, AND THAT HE WERE DROWNED IN THE DEPTH OF THE SEA." The Lord says he would be better off dead.

And the Lord says that it will not do any good to pray for him. His condition is irreversible. God has already pronounced judgment. The barren branch is burned up.

"There is a sin unto death; I do not say that ye shall pray for it."