

Difficult Texts In The Bible

Sin Leading To Death

(I Jn 5:13-20)

INTRODUCTION

1. Good Evening
 - a. Greeting...
2. Series of lessons on "Difficult Texts In The Bible"
 - a. We've looked at many different things in this series.
 - b. Today we will be looking at (in particular) **I Jn 5:16-17**, "Sin Leading To Death."
3. Breaking down I John
 - a. The author is the apostle John.
 - b. This was written sometime between the late 80's through the early 90's AD.
 - i. Thus they give us insight into the church at the end of the century.
 - ii. Also there is no mention of persecution and since Domitian started ruling and persecuting the Christians in 94 AD it would be before this most likely around 90 AD.
 - c. All three books are often called the "epistles of love."
 - i. "However, they deal primarily with false teachers who are called liars and antichrists." (Notes on N.T. Overview by Stapleton, Robert pg. 82)
 - d. I John outline
 - i. John witnessed the fact of Christ's having come in the flesh. (1:1-4)
 - ii. In order to have fellowship with God one must walk in the light. (1:5-2:17)
 - iii. Warnings given concerning antichrists. (2:18-29)
 - iv. Christians do not continue to live in sin. (3:1-10)
 - v. Meaning of true love. (3:11-24)
 - vi. False teachers are to be tested. (4:1-6)
 - vii. Additional teaching on true love. (4:7-5:3)
 - viii. Eternal life is in Jesus. (5:4-13)
 - ix. The need for prayer and forgiveness. (5:14-21)
 1. Robert Stapleton's outline from N.T. Overview pg. 84
4. Thus the apostle John "the apostle of love" writes about the love of God and the need to know the difference between those that teach that love, and those that are imposters of that love.

I. Exegetical Break Down Of Text

- A. Chapter five breaks down into three sections
 1. Them that overcome through Christ
 2. Them that testify about Christ
 3. The things "we know"
- B. It is the third section we find our text under consideration
 1. Here John, inspired by God, write five things Christians can know.
 - i. That Christians many know they have eternal life (13)
 - ii. That Christians will have their prayers answered (14-15)
 - iii. That Christians will not strive to sin (18)
 - iv. That Christians are from (ek out of) God and that the world lies (19)

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- v. That Christians have been given understanding by Jesus, and that understanding teaches that Jesus is true and that we are in Him because He is God & eternal life.
- C. Where we find our text in the "we know" section
 - 1. Our text is an example to the idea that we can know our prayers are answered.

II. Things The Text Is Not Saying

- A. That the prayer from one Christian will get God to remove the sin of another Christian
 - 1. No man has the power to forgive sins, but God alone.
 - i. **Mt 2:7, 10-11** "“Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”... 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”—He said to the paralytic, 11 “I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.””¹
 - 2. There is only one way man's sins are forgiven.
 - i. **I Jn 1:9** "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
 - ii. **Lk 13:3** "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."
 - 3. Thus no man can pray to God to forgive others sins and God be able to do so.
 - i. Well what about Stephen?
 - a. **Ac 7:60** "Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep."
 - ii. Stephen asked but did God answer...the answer is no.
 - a. **Ac 22:16** "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."
- B. This is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit
 - 1. Many hold to this view.
 - i. Most suggest that the blaspheming of the Holy Spirit is the unrepentant heart.
 - ii. It also asserted that John is talking about the same thing and thus they are equal in that regard.
 - 2. I would suggest that the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is not just an unrepentant heart but a onetime singular event only happened then. Calling God, Satan, based on miracles.
 - i. We only find it happening once and after it is rebuked it is never seen again.
 - ii. Thus it would not be the case under consideration here.

¹ All Scriptures are taken from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.

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- C. Sin can be categorized as venial and mortal
1. This is just crazy.
 - i. I know Catholics and some others teach this.
 - ii. I know we sometimes imply this...murder vs lying.
 2. However when you study it, it is simply false.
 3. One sin separates us from God.
 - i. **Ro 6:23** "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
 - ii. **Is 59:1-2** "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. 2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear."
 4. Separation from God equals eternity from God (if there is no reconciliation).
 - i. **Mt 7:21-23** "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"
 5. Thus venial or non-separation from God sin is impossible.
 - i. Venial meaning sins that " do not break our friendship with God, although they injure it." (<http://goo.gl/iI5WP>)
 - ii. Mortal meaning that which " is the "spiritual" death of the soul (separation from God)." (Ibid)

III. What Is This Text Saying

- A. Remember verses 16-17 are an example of how prayers are answered
1. John just wrote in 14 & 15 that we can have confidence in our prayers being answered. This is in accordance with other verses naturally.
 - i. **Ja 1:5-7** "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord"
- B. The facts of our specific texts
1. Christians are under consideration.
 - i. Brethren seeing brethren.
 2. Christians are "seeing" a brother commit sin.
 - i. The Greek word here for seeing is "εἶδον" or "adon."
 - a. It is in the aorist tense meaning " is used by the writer to present the action of a verb as a "snapshot" event. The verb's action is portrayed simply and in summary fashion without respect to any process." (Heiser, M. S. (2005; 2005). Glossary of Morpho-Syntactic Database Terminology. Logos Bible Software.)

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- ii. In other words it's saying a Christian sees or notices something and that something is a brother/sister sinning. The Christian is not recollecting but currently seeing.
 - iii. "Committing sin" or "sin a sin" or "sinning a sin"
 - a. "Committing/sin/sinning" is a participle meaning it is a verbal adjective.
 - b. "The participle agrees grammatically with...(brother), and with the cognate accusative...(sin); it is a sinning brother who stands, as it were, before our very eyes." (A Commentary On The New Testament Epistles Vol. VII by Woods, Guy pg. 321)
 - 3. Christians are seeing sin unto or not unto death ie leading/not leading to death.
 - i. There are two ways sin kills.
 - a. It kills spiritually where eventually one will end up in hell.
 - b. It kills physically where one will eventually end up in hell.
 - ii. We already mentioned the spiritual death.
 - a. **Ro 6:23**
 - iii. Sin unto physical death we see in scripture also.
 - a. **I Co 11:29-30** "For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30 That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died." (ESV)
 - b. What about suicide ie self murder.
 - 1. Drunk driving leading to death.
 - 2. Aids, alcohol poisoning, over dosing...
 - 4. Christians can pray for him/her who they see sinning.
 - i. There is nothing wrong with praying for those sinning in fact it's biblical.
 - a. **Lk 23:34** "Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots."
 - b. **Mt 5:44** "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you"
 - 5. All unlawfulness is sin but there is sin not leading to death.
 - i. **I Jn 3:4** "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness."
- C. The possible meanings
- 1. It could be that the sin leading to death is unrepentant sin.
 - i. Only those that repent of sin will be forgiven sin.
 - a. **I Jn 1:9**
 - 2. It could be that the sin leading to death is sin that literally kills someone.
 - i. Those that die committing sin are lost, they asked not for forgiveness.
 - a. **I Jn 1:9**

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3. It could be that the sin leading to death is sin that literally kills but during the age of miracles.
 - i. In other words those that had the gift of healing could pray over and heal or not depending on the repentance of sins.
 - a. **Ja 5:13-16**
- D. The biblical meaning
 1. As I have studied the three of these I see only one that seems to fit without any problems contextually.
 2. It seems to be that of the sin that literally kills and here's why...
 - i. The Christian who sees the sin happening sees sin that could either produce death or not produce death.
 - a. The scene seems to be one of a snap shot of time not a prolonged time which is what is need to determine if a brother/sister is unrepentant of a sin.
 - iii. Though it would fit with the age of miracles without any problems schematically it would not fit contextually.
 - a. The context of this section is dealing with present time and at this time the age of miracles would have been almost extinct but also the context does not lead itself to that of the miraculous because none of the other "we knows" deals with miracles.
 3. Thus it seems to be John is writing saying that there is no need to pray for someone that had died as it is too late but for the one that has not died physically there is still time, pray for that one.

CONCLUSION

1. As always brethren remember that any difficult passage can be understood in light of clearer passages.
2. Invitation
 - a. God's Plan of Salvation
 - i. Hear/Study **Rom 10:17; II Tim 2:15**
 - ii. Believe Jesus Is The Christ **Jn 3:16; 8:24**
 - iii. Repent/Turn To God **Ac 17:30; Lk 24:47**
 - iv. Confess Jesus As Lord **Mt 10:32; Rom 10:9**
 - v. Immersed For The Forgiveness of Sins **Ac 2:38; 22:16; I Pt 3:21**
 - vi. Live A Faithful Life **I Jn 1:7; Eph 5:8**