

DOCTRINAL STUDIES

The Sin Unto Death

1. DEFINITION: God's hand of discipline upon the believer who is out of fellowship, and whose lifestyle is one of rebellion, non-perception, and disobedience to the Word of God. This discipline includes intense pressure and misery which, if the believer does not recover, terminates with physical death (1 John 5:16; Psalms 118:17-18).
2. Biblical descriptions of being out of fellowship: the "uncircumcised heart"-Jere. 9:25, the "unstable soul"- II Peter 2:14, the "vexed" (tortured) soul- II Peter 2:7,8, the "reprobate" (worthless) mind. Other passages on a chronic out-of-fellowship state resulting in the sin unto death (SUD): Jere. 9:16; 44:12; Phi1. 3:18; Rev. 3:16.
3. Steps down the road toward the SUD.
 - It always begins with the neglect of and/or non-perception to the Word of God (I Cor. 10:12)
 - The believer then becomes enticed, deluded, and trapped by whatever aspect of Satan's world system that lured him away from the Word. Cut off from the Word, his soul becomes empty, creating a vacuum in his life that drives him insatiably on a frantic search for happiness. This may be manifest in the area of lasciviousness or religiosity, according to the particular bent of his old sinful nature (OSN).
 - This frantic search may at first stumble upon brief moments of pleasure and satisfaction, but these are always short-lived. The frantic search for happiness always results in progressively severe instability of life, emotional disturbances, and self-induced misery.
 - Since there is no real happiness apart from a proper relationship with God and His Word, those on this path may variously become negative, maligning, judgmental, gossipy, backbiting, spiteful, vengeful, jealous, lewd, dissipate, immoral, faithless, treacherous, rootless-in short, all of the many manifestations of the unfettered OSN.
 - This condition can end in only one of two ways:
 - This person becomes restored to fellowship (1 John 1 :9) AND repents of the lifestyle that has entrapped and enslaved him (a progressive and continual turning away from habitual sins) by substituting it with a lifestyle focused on taking in the Word, and then consciously and decisively obeying it.
 - Or, this person may ignore God's progressive discipline, eventually becoming so calloused and numbed to its warnings and so habitually enslaved to a reprobate lifestyle, that recovery becomes impossible. When this happens God finally takes the believer home via an untimely physical death. (Acts 5:1-10; I Cor. 5:1-5; II Cor. 2:6-11.)
4. Restoration to fellowship will eliminate the intensive discipline which would result in the sin unto death. Although He may not eliminate the natural consequences of a past lifestyle of sin, He will give peace, joy, and victory to the life of those having thus recovered (II Cor. 5-10).
5. The SUD does not mean loss of salvation. (II Tim. 2:12, 13)
6. Biblical examples of the SUD:
 - Lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1-10)
 - Incest (1 Cor. 5:1-5)
 - Consistent carnality without RTF (1 Cor. 11 :30, 31)
 - Continual rejection of the Word of God (1 Sam 13:9-14; I Chron. 10:13,14)
7. Biblical exhortations on the cancellation of the SUD :
 - RTF (restoration to fellowship) (I Cor. 11:31)
 - A change in attitude toward the authority of the Word of God and the communicator of God's Truth (II Cor. 2:5-10)
 - Christian development-the building of the SHS (spiritual house of the soul) (Eph. 4:24)