

# Doctrine of The Sin Unto Death

These studies are designed for believers in Jesus Christ only. If you have exercised faith in Christ, then you are in the right place. If you have not, then you need to heed the words of our Lord, Who said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son, so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him shall not perish, but shall be have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world so that He should judge the world, but so that the world shall be saved through Him. The one believing [or, trusting] in Him is not judged, but the one not believing has already been judged, because he has not believed in the Name of the only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son of God.” (John 3:16–18). “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life! No one comes to the Father except through [or, by means of] Me!” (John 14:6).

Every study of the Word of God ought to be preceded by a naming of your sins to God. This restores you to fellowship with God (1John 1:8–10). If we acknowledge our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1John 1:9). If there are people around, you would name these sins silently. If there is no one around, then it does not matter if you name them silently or whether you speak aloud.

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**Preface:** The *sin unto death* is not a particular sin, but the final stage of discipline for the believer whose life has gone awry.

Usually, when there is a doctrine out there which covers the topic, I defer to that doctrine; however, there are at least 3 sources out there, which, individually, present an incomplete picture. Therefore, I have taken their material and put it together below. However, almost none of the doctrine below is original with me.

1. Introduction and definition

- 1) The phrase "sin unto death" describes the final stage of divine discipline in which God removes from the earth the person who is totally alienated from God. The "sin unto death" is not a particular sin; but it is, rather, a mental attitude of total indifference to and rebellion against the will and purpose of God.
- 2) The spiritual condition of the person who comes under the "sin unto death" is characterized by continual and maximum carnality (remaining out of fellowship); and this punishment represents God's final step of chastisement to those who are in maximum alienation from God. Only God can discern the true nature of a person's mind, attitude, or volition; and only God knows whether a person is actually implacable and deserving of physical death.
- 3) The "sin unto death" is described as a principle in 1John 5:16 Psalm 118:17,18 Ezek. 18:21-32.
- 4) The sin unto death is not a particular sin nor is it a list of sins.
- 5) There are definite characteristics by which to recognize the conditions which lead to God's applying the "sin unto death":
  - (1) A persistent, unconfessed sin.
  - (2) Sin which continues unchecked with no repentance, may bring a person under this category.
  - (3) The person who persistently ignores Grace, warnings, and discipline may come under the "sin unto death." Lev. 26.
  - (4) Sin which has a maximum adverse effect on other people (causing stumbling) may lead a person into severe discipline, even to the sin unto death.
- 6) Dying the sin unto death is *not* a loss of one's salvation; it is simply the ultimate discipline of God for the believer. The believer is no longer of any use to God and their constant soulish rebellion has reached a stage where, in God's plan, it is best that person die.
  - (1) You may wonder, how can a loving God remove a Christian from this earth? Easy. God loves all believers with the same amount of love. The believer guilty of the sin unto death is very likely guilty of leading many other believers astray. Removing some believers simply minimizes the collateral damage which they cause.
  - (2) Some families have experienced a similar circumstance. There is a young son, and he has become so involved with drugs (or alcohol) that the family must completely and totally cut him off—from all family interaction. The end result is best for the family as a whole. This is an illustration of the sin unto death; the family obviously does not kill the wayward son.

2. Illustrations

- 1) Illustrations of the Sin Unto Death.
  - (1) Gen X of the Exodus generation. They are described in Num. 14:26–30 [And the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, "How long shall this wicked congregation grumble against me? I have](#)

heard the grumbings of the people of Israel, which they grumble against me. Say to them, 'As I live, declares the LORD, what you have said in my hearing I will do to you: your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness, and of all your number, listed in the census from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against me, not one shall come into the land where I swore that I would make you dwell, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.' ”

See also Num. 14:20–23, 33 Joshua 5:6 Heb. 3:7–11

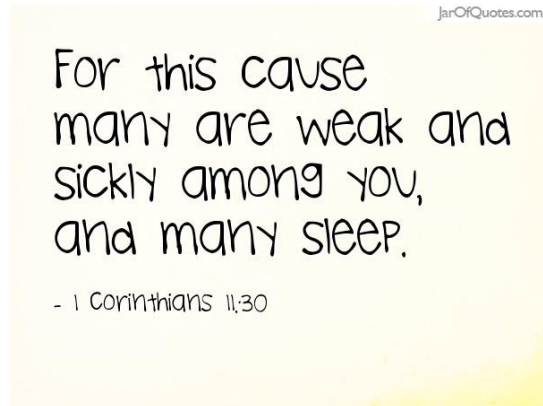
- (2) Nadab and Abihu. Their lines were ended, and Eleazar was not commanded to provide for their lines to be preserved. Lev. 10:1-2 1Chr. 24:1-2
  - (3) Eli and his sons. 1Sam. 2:12-17,22-36 3:1-21 4:4-18
  - (4) Saul and his sons. 1Sam. 15:10-35; 31:1-7 1Chr. 10:13-14
  - (5) Ananias and Saphira. Acts 5:1-11
  - (6) Hymenaeus and Alexander. 1Tim. 1:20
- 2) Illustration of failures who were not under the sin unto death:
- (1) Solomon is an outstanding example here. He married 700 wives and had 300 mistresses. There was a point in his life during which, he essentially did any damn thing that he wanted to do. Why didn't God say, "I have had enough with your sins and you indulging your fleshly desires—you are toast, Solomon! But God did not do that. Why? Let me suggest that Solomon, despite his great failures, would rebound and he would have a great spiritual life at the end of his life (during which time, he will write the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes). God, in His omniscience, disciplined Solomon, but He did not remove Solomon from the throne.
  - (2) The Apostle Paul made a serious error of legalism in order to get a hearing from the Jewish believers in Jerusalem. Now, God had removed some believers in the early Church Age for errors which would seem much less important: Annanias and Saphira, for instance, or the Christian believers who participated in the Eucharist while out of fellowship—but God did not suddenly remove Paul from this life. Let me again suggest that God is able to see into the future, and God preserved Paul's life for what he did later on. However, God also disciplined Paul as well. I don't want you to plan on being a great servant of God, but first, you are going to engage in great sins for a bit of fun.

**Sin Unto Death Verses** (a graphic); from [Visible Christianity](#); accessed October 18, 2015.

- 3) Illustrations of the Sin Unto Death judgment being stayed.
  - (1) David's almost dying the sin unto death. 2Sam. 12:13
  - (2) Hezekiah's close call. 2Kgs. 20:1-11; Isa. 38:1-22
  - (3) The Corinthian man who committed incest. 1Cor. 5:5 2Cor. 2:6-11
- 4) Illustrations of the Sin Unto Death judgment being stayed, then reinstated.
  - (1) Moses' deferment (Ex. 4:24) and later judgment (Deut. 32:48-52).
  - (2) Balaam's deferment (Num. 22:31) and later judgment (Num. 31:8).
3. Suffering the sin unto death does not mean a loss of salvation. With regards to the incestuous believer in Corinth, Paul wrote: **You are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord** (1Cor. 5:5). Our salvation is dependent upon Jesus Christ and His death on the cross for our sins. It is not dependent upon the sort of life we lead post-salvation. If you can lose your salvation after God has saved you, then your salvation is dependent upon you. Our salvation is a matter of faith alone in Christ alone; and once we have believed in Jesus Christ, we cannot lose the eternal life which God grants us. John 5:24 **Point of fact: I say to you, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.** 2Tim. 2:13 **if we are faithless, He [yet] remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.**
4. There are at least nine descriptive terms for the Sin unto Death in the Bible.
  - 1) Delivered over to Satan (1Cor.5:5 1Tim.1:20 Phil.3:19).
  - 2) Carcasses falling (Heb.3:17; 1 Cor.10:5; Num.14:29).
  - 3) Given over to death (Psalm118:18).
  - 4) Taken away (John 15:2 Acts 5:1-11).
  - 5) Swift destruction (2Peter 2:1, 12).
  - 6) Destroyed by the Destroyer (1Cor.10:10 Jude 5).
  - 7) Crawling out a burning house with clothes on fire (Jude 23)
  - 8) Premature death (Eph.6:1-4 Ex.20:12 Deut.5:16)
  - 9) Sleep (euphemism for death of believer) (1Cor.11:27-32/ Eucharist/ 11:30)

- 1 CORINTHIANS 11: 30 "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."  
(10:16-17, 11:24) This is a public vow before God and man ... God takes it very serious.
- ACTS 5: 4 "Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God."
- NUMBERS 14: 2 "And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!"

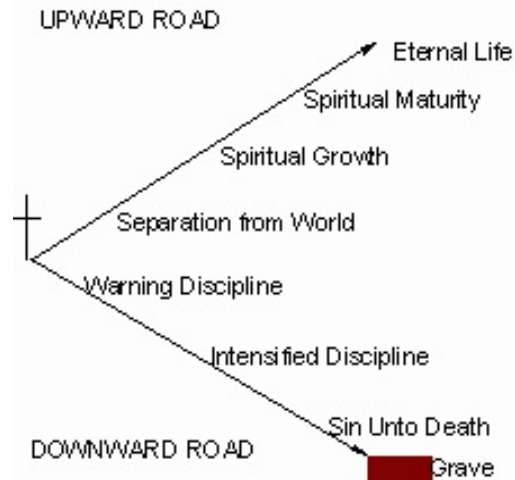
**1Corinthians 11:30 Graphic;** from [Jar of Quotes](#); accessed October 18, 2015.



5. There are sins which are not "unto death."
  - 1) First of all, there is a sin not unto death (ἀμαρτάνοντα ἀμαρτίαν μὴ πρὸς θάνατον). 1John 5:16–17
    - (1) The context is a confident prayer ministry based upon our life in Christ. 1John 5:13-15
    - (2) Intercessory prayer is prescribed for brothers sinning non-leading-to-death sin.
    - (3) We should never request that any brother is subject to the sin unto death. Such a request is an ἐρωτάω request (1John 5:16b) rather than an αἰτέω request (1John 5:14–16a).
  - 2) A sin which is confessed is not "unto death." God does not discipline us with the sin unto death for a forgiven sin. 1John 1:9 1Cor. 11:31 Psalm 32:5 38
  - 3) A sin which is discontinued is not "unto death." Heb. 12:1 Ezek. 18:21-32
  - 4) The person who responds positively to divine discipline is not involved in the "sin unto death." Heb. 12:6, 11-15
  - 5) The antithesis of death as a purpose-consequence is the glory of God purpose-consequence. John 11:4
    - (1) Unrepentant, unconfessed sin results in operational death and premature physical death.
    - (2) Confessed sin restores operational life and extends physical life with the purpose-consequence of God's glory being achieved.
6. So there is no fear that you might be suddenly subject to the sin unto death, there is a series of steps leading to that point. Heb. 12:5–11
  - 1) Light discipline, called knocking in Heb. 12:5a Rev. 3:19–20 (which is a discipline passage, not a salvation passage, as it is too often incorrectly portrayed).
  - 2) Heavy or severe discipline. **Do not faint when you are reprovved by Him; for those whom the lord loves He disciplines and He scourges every son whom He receives** (Heb. 12:5b–6). Scourging certainly represents severe discipline.
  - 3) Then the sin unto death.
  - 4) There are exceptions to this, as we saw above with Ananias and Saphira. They were give a very short time to be honest and they chose not to be.

### The Upward and Downward Roads

(a graphic) comes from Biblenews1; accessed October 18, 2015. This illustrates that the believer is always advancing or retrogressing. Although this is an excellent graphic, it needs to be emphasized that the believer who goes out on the sin unto death is not in hell. That believer also enjoys eternal life, just as the person who takes the upward road.



#### 7. Summary and conclusions

- 1) The OT and the NT provide multiple illustrations for the Sin Unto Death.
- 2) Illustrations are provided as warnings. 1Cor. 10:1-11
- 3) The bottom-line cause of Sin Unto Death is idolatry (which is placing something else over God in your scale of values). 1John 5:21
  - (1) The case of "lying to the Holy Spirit" (Ananias and Sapphira). Acts 5:1-10. Ananias and Sapphira pursued the idolatry of approbation-lust (Acts 5:1-11).
  - (2) The case of persistent carnality while sitting at the Lord's Table. Defiling the Lord's Supper is the idolatrous practice of eating the table of demons. 1Cor. 10:20-22 11:30-31
  - (3) Apostasy is the idolatrous practice of living the teachings of demons. Rev. 2:20-24 1Tim. 4:1
  - (4) The case of disobedience to the Word of God.. King Saul did not kill Agag although directly ordered to do so by God; he insisted on personally offering sacrifices in the place of divinely appointed priests; and he consulted a witch, itself a capital offense. 1Chron.10:13,14 1Sam. 13:9-14
  - (5) The case of self-righteousness and dependence on man which was perpetuated (case of Hezekiah). Isa. 38
  - (6) The case of apostasy on the part of a believer. Num. 31:8 1Tim. 1:19,20.

## Bibliography

Sources:

<http://www.realtime.net/~wdoud/topics/sindeath.html>

[http://gracebiblechurchwichita.org/?page\\_id=539](http://gracebiblechurchwichita.org/?page_id=539) (This is a dead link now)

<http://www.doctrinalstudies.com/pdf/D100105.pdf>

All were accessed February 11, 2013. However, L. S. Chafer taught the sin unto death briefly in his 8 volume set *Systematic Theology* (Vol. VII, p. 166); which doctrine was expanded upon considerably by R. B. Thieme, Jr.

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The phrase "sin unto death" describes the final stage of divine discipline in which God removes from the earth the person who is totally alienated from God. The "sin unto death" is not a particular sin; but it is, rather, a mental attitude of total indifference to and rebellion against the will and purpose of God. This was taken from **Deuteronomy 2** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

## Generation X and the Sin unto Death

1. This all began with God telling the people of Israel to go in and to take the land; and they refused to. 12 spies went into the land, and when they came back, 10 of them advised against taking the land.
2. Then God ordered them back into the desert-wilderness.
3. The Israelites did not like that option, so they told Moses that they would now attack the Canaanites and the Amorites.
4. God told Moses that they were not to do this because He was not with them; but they did anyway.
5. They were beaten back by the Canaanites and the Amorites.
6. When God told them to zig, they zagged; and when God said, "Zag," they zigged.
7. God told Moses that He was ready to start from scratch; that He would bring up the children of promise from Moses alone. Moses protested, and took up for the Israelites, acting as their advocate and mediator. Num. 14:11–20
  - 1) The whole purpose of Moses advocating for His people was to act as a type of Christ.
  - 2) So this is a set of historical events which actually happened, but they look forward in history to our Lord's relationship to us.
  - 3) No doubt many times Satan goes to God about you or I and says, "No Christian ought to act this way and live;" and Jesus acts as our advocate, our intercessor and our mediator. Or a fallen angel says, "Kukis can't be saved. Did you see what he did over the weekend?" And Jesus says, "He is in Me and I am in him."
  - 4) This is why many believers are still alive walking around on planet earth, although it may appear as if they have nothing to show for their lives on earth.

## Generation X and the Sin unto Death

8. Back to Moses advocating for the people of Israel. God relented, but said that He would remove Gen X from the picture. For every day that the spies were in the land, the Jews would spend 1 year outside of the land. This is described in Num. 14:28–35 “As I live, declares the LORD, what you have said in My hearing I will do to you: your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness, and of all your number, listed in the census from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against me, not one shall come into the land where I swore that I would make you dwell, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, who you said would become a prey, I will bring in, and they shall know the land that you have rejected. But as for you, your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years and shall suffer for your faithlessness, until the last of your dead bodies lies in the wilderness. According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, a year for each day, you shall bear your iniquity forty years, and you shall know my displeasure.’ I, the LORD, have spoken. Surely this will I do to all this wicked congregation who are gathered together against Me: in this wilderness they shall come to a full end, and there they shall die.” (ESV, capitalized)
9. During that time, God would kill all of Gen X (except for Caleb and Joshua, of course).
10. **Psalm 90** is all about this time when Israel spins its wheels in the desert-wilderness. ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).
11. Vv. 14–15 give the culmination of all this: 38 years passed, from living at Kadesh-barnea to crossing over the brook Zered. In that time, an entire generation of men had passed from the scene, suffering the sin unto death, just as Jehovah had sworn would happen. Jehovah’s hand was against them with the intent of destroying them from out of the camp of Israelites (and Israel’s forward movement was stalled) until this destruction was complete.
12. This generation is referenced throughout the Bible: Psalm 95:11 Ezek. 20:15 Heb. 3:8–19 Jude 1:5

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David knows that, because of the awful decisions that he has made, and how he has been out of fellowship, that God might take him out of this world via the sin unto death.

This was taken from **Psalm 51** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

## The Sin Unto Death—the Basic Concept and References

1. First of all, we know that there is a sin unto death, as it is mentioned in 1John 5:16–17
2. And secondly, we understand that this does not involve a loss of salvation. All



## The Sin Unto Death—the Basic Concept and References

believers are saved on the basis of what Jesus did for us on the cross. We cannot lose that salvation because it is not based upon what we actually do in our lives. Whatever sins we have committed, those sins are paid for on the cross. See the **Doctrine of Eternal Security**. External links: [Robert Dean](#), [Grace Notes](#), [Robert R. McLaughlin](#), [Lewis S. Chafer](#), [H. A. Ironside](#), [Grace Bible Church of Baytown](#), and [Verse by Verse](#) (click on *printed doctrines* and then go to *Eternal Security*).

3. The sin unto death marks the third and last step of God's progressive discipline upon an individual:
  - 1) There is first warning discipline, which is Jesus knocking at the door. Heb.12:12-13
  - 2) Then there is intensive discipline, where the discipline that we are under begins to hurt dramatically. Hosea.2:6 John5:5 cp.14 2Thess.3:14 Rev.2:21-22 cf. Lev.26:14-39
  - 3) Finally, if we are unrepentant—if we choose to remain out of fellowship—then God takes us out of this life via the sin unto death. Micah2:3 1John5:17
4. Case histories:
  - 1) David, who recovered. 2Sam. 11–21 Psalm 51
  - 2) King Saul, who died the sin unto death. 1Sam. 15:10–35 31:1–7 1Chron. 10:13–14
  - 3) Ananias and Saphira. Acts 5:1–11
  - 4) Corinthians who were partaking of the Lord's Supper out of fellowship. 1Cor. 10:20–22 11:31
5. One may understand the sin unto death to occur when, your rebelliousness against God has reached a tipping point where you are probably not going to name your sins and get back into fellowship with Him; or, if you do, you are going to exit this fellowship almost immediately. In any case, you have lost all potential for spiritual impact in life.

The complete doctrine is found here: ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

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This is the work of other pastor-teachers:

### Additional Links to the Sin unto Death

Grace Notes: <https://www2.gracenotes.info/topics/sin-unto-death.html>

Grace Bible Church of Baytown:

[www.gracebiblechurchbaytown.org/uploads/1/0/1/6/10165395/sin.unto.death.pdf](http://www.gracebiblechurchbaytown.org/uploads/1/0/1/6/10165395/sin.unto.death.pdf)

[www.gracebiblechurchbaytown.org/uploads/1/0/1/6/10165395/sin.unto.death.2.pdf](http://www.gracebiblechurchbaytown.org/uploads/1/0/1/6/10165395/sin.unto.death.2.pdf)

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