

When It Is Lawful to Hope and Plead That a Lesser Sin Be Committed

By Richard Joseph Michael Ibranyi

Table of Contents

<i>God forbids men to commit any sin, be it a greater or a lesser sin.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>By God’s grace and their cooperation men can avoid all sin</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Hence no man can be forced to sin.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>God does not forbid men to tell a sinner set on sinning to commit a lesser sin.....</i>	<i>2</i>
Examples	3
Miscellaneous	3
Lot’s offering his virgin daughters to be raped	4
The Levite’s offering his concubine to be raped	8
Inside vs. outside the confessional	8

God forbids men to commit any sin, be it a greater or a lesser sin

It is a dogma that a man who commits a lesser sin to avoid a greater sin is guilty of sin nevertheless. Even though he avoided greater guilt, he still incurred guilt for committing the lesser sin:

“A thief is better than a man that is always lying, but both of them shall inherit destruction.” (Eccus. 20:27)

“But yet as to these they are less to be blamed. For they perhaps err, seeking God, and desirous to find him. For being conversant among his works, they search; and they are persuaded that the things are good which are seen. But then again they are not to be pardoned.” (Wis. 13:6-8)

“So he that goeth in to his neighbour’s wife shall not be clean when he shall touch her. The fault is not so great when a man hath stolen, for he stealeth to fill his hungry soul: And if he be taken he shall restore sevenfold, and shall give up all the substance of his house. But he that is an adulterer, for the folly of his heart shall destroy his own soul.” (Prv. 6:29-32)

Catholic Commentary on Prv. 6:30: “**The sin is not so great:** The sin of theft is not so great as to be compared with adultery, especially when a person pressed with hunger (which is the case here spoken of) steals to satisfy nature. Moreover, the damage done by theft may much more easily be repaired than the wrong done by adultery. But this does not hinder but that theft also is a mortal sin, forbidden by one of the ten commandments.”

“And whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all.” (Ja. 2:10)

By God’s grace and their cooperation men can avoid all sin

No man has to sin because by God’s grace and man’s cooperation he can avoid all sins, mortal or venial. God never commands men to do the impossible, and God commands men to obey all of his commandments and thus to commit no sin:

Jesus says, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” (Mt. 19:17)

St. Paul says, “That thou keep the commandment without spot, blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ...” (1 Tim. 6:14)

Jesus says, “Sin no more. (Jn. 8:11) Sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee. (Jn. 5:14)”

St. John says, “Whosoever abideth in him [Jesus], sinneth not... Whosoever is born of God committeth not sin; for his seed abideth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God.” (1 Jn. 3:6, 9)

St. Jude says, “To him who is able to preserve you without sin, and to present you spotless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Jude 1:24)

Hence no man can be forced to sin

No one can force a man to commit any sin, as God promises to protect all men from sinning provided they cooperate with his grace. A man must be willing to be tortured and die rather than commit any sin, mortal or venial. Hence a man who gives in to torture, or any other persecution, and thus sins is guilty of that sin:

“We are ready to die rather than to transgress the laws of God, received from our fathers.” (2 Mac. 7:2)

“And all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” (2 Tim. 3:12)

“And you shall be hated by all men for my name’s sake. But he that shall endure unto the end, he shall be saved.” (Mk. 13:13)

“For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel, shall save it. For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?” (Mk. 8:35-36)

“For think diligently upon him that endured such opposition from sinners against himself, that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds. For you have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” (Heb. 12:3-4)

Therefore, God forbids men to commit any sin and thus even a lesser sin to avoid a greater sin. Hence a man who commits a lesser sin to avoid a greater sin is still guilty for committing the lesser sin. And anyone who approves of, condones, induces, or helps a man to commit a lesser sin to avoid a greater sin is also guilty of the lesser sin.

God does not forbid men to tell a sinner set on sinning to commit a lesser sin

However, a man must tolerate sin when he has no authority, influence, or power to stop it and thus knows that sin is going to be committed no matter what he says or does. In this case, the man must hope and work for a lesser sin to be committed. He is not committing, approving of, or condoning the lesser sin nor inducing or helping the sinner to commit it. Instead, he is approving of the greater good that comes from preventing a greater sin.¹ And he must still condemn the lesser sin and the sinner who committed it, which is proof that he did not approve of or condone the lesser sin nor induce or help the sinner to commit it. His appeal or plea to the sinner to commit a lesser sin in this case is not a consensual appeal or plea but a *mitigating* appeal or plea. Hence his plea does not consent to the lesser sin but seeks to mitigate the greater sin. Even though the following moral theologians are apostates, they teach the truth in this regard:

¹ This is similar to Catholics voting for lesser-evil laws and rulers. (See RJMI book *On Voting for the Lesser Evil*.)

Moral Theology, by apostates John A. McHugh, O.P.; and Charles J. Callan, O.P., 1958: “Is it lawful to advise another to commit a lesser evil in preference to a greater evil?”

“If the other has not made up his mind to commit either evil, it is not lawful to advise that he do either. Thus, to counsel another to steal, and to make his victims the rich rather than the poor, is a species of seduction.

“If the person has made up his mind to commit the greater evil [instead of a] lesser evil..., it is lawful to advise that he omit the former for the latter. For in thus acting one prevents the greater evil and does not cause the lesser evil,... which the other person had already decided on. Thus, if Titus is bent on stealing \$100, Balbus is not guilty of seduction if he persuades Titus to take only \$10. We are supposing, of course, that Titus is so determined to steal that it is out of the question to deter him from taking at least a small amount...

“What one does thereby is not to commit the lesser evil, to induce it or approve it, but only to permit it in order to lessen the harm that will be done, and they confirm their argument from scripture (Gen. 19:8 on Lot offering his daughters). According... it would be lawful to advise robbery in order to dissuade another from the greater evil of murder... [Hence] it is lawful to propose the lesser evil or mention it provided one does not attempt to induce the other person to carry it into effect.”²

Moral Theology, by apostate Rev. Heribert Jone, O.F.M. cap., J.C.D., 1961:

“Advising a lesser sin than the one the sinner is about to commit is ordinarily allowed if the sinner cannot be otherwise deterred from committing the greater sin.”³

Examples

Miscellaneous

- A son tells his father that he is going to murder a man. The father commands his son not to harm the man in any way because it would be a sin. The son leaves the house in a rage and says that he is going to murder the man. The father’s first prayer and hope is that his son not hurt the man in any way. His second prayer and hope is that if his son is set on attacking the man, then may he only beat the man and thus not commit the greater sin of murder. In this case, the father is not committing or approving of the lesser sin nor inducing or helping his son commit it but is seeking to prevent the greater sin of murder.
- If an evildoer is about to murder Catholic men, women, and children, and Catholics have no control over it, they will first pray that he does not murder any of them. But if the evildoer is set on murder, then they must pray that he murder only the men and thus spare the women and children. In this case, the Catholics are not committing or approving of the murder of the men nor inducing or helping the murderers but are

² *Nihil Obstat*: John A. Goodwine, J.C.D., *Censor Librorum*. Imprimatur: + Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York, New York, May 24, 1958. Published by Joseph F. Wagner, Inc., New York City, and B. Herder, London, 1958. Sections 1502-1503.

³ English and adapted to the laws and customs of the United States of America by Rev. Urban Adelman, O.F.M. cap., J.C.D., 1963; *Nihil Obstat*, Pius Kaelin, O.F.M. cap., *Censor Deputatus*. *Imprimi Potest*: Giles Staab, O.F.M. cap., provincial, November 30, 1961; Imprimatur: John J. Wright, D.D., Bishop of Pittsburgh, December 8, 1961. Published by the Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland. Pt. 2, c. 6, s. 144, 3, 3.

seeking to prevent the greater and more numerous sins of murdering the women and children.

- A widow and her virgin daughter are prisoners and the guards are going to rape the daughter. In this case, the widow does not have any power, influence, or authority to stop it and thus knows sin is going to be committed. Hence the widow can first make a plea to the guards not to rape her virgin daughter or anyone else. But if they are set on raping, she can then tell them to rape her instead, which who can doubt that this would be a noble and virtuous sacrifice. In this case, the widow is not committing nor approving of the lesser sin nor inducing or helping the sinners to commit it but is seeking to prevent the greater sin of the rape of her virgin daughter.
- A husband, his wife, his two virgin daughters, and two male guests are under the power of homosexuals who want to rape the two male guests. The father is powerless to prevent sin from being committed. His first plea to the homos is to not rape anyone. If he sees they are set on raping, his second plea would be to rape his two virgin daughters instead in order to prevent the commission of the greater sin of sodomy. And he would also be preventing the additional sin of inhospitality for not protecting his guests. He would not offer his wife because adultery is a greater sin than fornication. In this case, the father is not committing or approving of the lesser sin nor inducing or helping the sinners to commit it but is seeking to prevent the greater sin of sodomy and the additional sin of inhospitality.

Lot's offering his virgin daughters to be raped

Anyone who reads the Bible knows that this last example is what Lot did:

“And they called Lot, and said to him: Where are the men that came in to thee at night? Bring them out hither that we may know them. Lot went out to them, and shut the door after him, and said: Do not so, I beseech you, my brethren, do not commit this evil. I have two daughters who as yet have not known man: I will bring them out to you, and abuse you them as it shall please you, so that you do no evil to these men, because they are come in under the shadow of my roof.” (Gen. 19:5-8)

Now Lot would not be guilty of approving of the sin provided he truly had no power to stop it and thus knew sin was going to be committed no matter what. And this seems to be the case, as nothing in the Bible accuses Lot of sinning in this matter, as when David sinned with Bethsabee. Instead, the Bible only refers to Lot as a just man. St. Peter says,

“And reducing the cities of the Sodomites and of the Gomorrhites into ashes, [God] condemned them to be overthrown, making them an example to those that should after act wickedly. And delivered just Lot, oppressed by the injustice and lewd conversation of the wicked. For in sight and hearing he was just, dwelling among them who from day to day vexed the just soul with unjust works.” (2 Pt. 2:6-8)

St. Ambrose and the heretic John Chrysostom hold, what I also believe to be the true opinion, that Lot was justified in offering his two virgin daughters to be raped in order to

prevent the greater sin of sodomy and the additional sin of inhospitality against the two male guests, who were angels in disguise. Hence Lot did not approve of the lesser sin but sought to prevent the greater sin of sodomy and the additional sin of inhospitality.

Therefore, Lot's plea in this case was mitigating and not consensual:

St. Ambrose, *Duties of the Clergy*, 4th century: "Lot also, his [Abraham's] nephew, who was near to him not only in relationship but also in virtue, on account of his readiness to show hospitality, turned aside the punishment of Sodom from himself and his family."⁴

St. Ambrose, *On Abraham*, 4th century: "The venerable Lot offered his daughters' virginity [cf. Genesis 19:8]. For although that violation was infamous, yet it is a lesser offence to come together according to nature than to sin against nature. He preferred the hallowed grace of hospitality even among barbarian peoples to the honour of his house. So the hospitality is also inviolate where not even kinship is wholly safe. But the Angels struck the Sodomites with blindness, so that they could not find the door of the house... Inasmuch as the venerable Lot was drawn back into the house by the hands of the guests, he is shown, regardless of peril and mindful of faith, not to have fled the danger, but to have exposed himself to it."⁵

Heretic John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis*, Homily 43, 4th century: "(17) 'By no means, brothers,' he says, 'don't be so depraved.' Don't entertain such ideas, he is saying, don't think of doing such awful things, don't be false to your very nature, don't even imagine such illicit relations. But if you're bent on satisfying the frenzy of your passion, I will supply the means of rendering your exploit less serious. 'I have two daughters, who have had no relations with men.' They are still without experience of marital intercourse, in fact they are virgins, in their prime, with the bloom of youth upon them; I will hand them over to you to be used as you wish. Take them, he says, and on them spend your lust and discharge your evil desires. 'Only don't do any wrong to these men, since they have found protection under my roof.' Since I obliged them, he is saying, to come under my roof lest crimes committed against them be attributed to me and I be held guilty of this insult to them, consequently I offer my two daughters for them to save them from your hands. (18) What marvelous virtue in the just man! He surpassed all the standards of hospitality!"

And this is true, provided Lot did not have the power and a chance to prevent any sin from occurring. If he had, then he would have sinned by offering his daughters to be raped when he had the power and a chance to prevent it.

While St. Augustine correctly teaches the dogma that men must not commit any sin and thus that it is heresy and immoral to teach that a man is justified (not guilty) for committing a lesser sin instead of a greater sin, he wrongly applies his correct teaching to Lot. Hence St. Augustine held the opinion that Lot was guilty for offering his two virgin daughters to be raped. His main error is that he believes that it is always sinful to pray, hope, or request that a lesser sin be committed to prevent a greater sin and thus even in cases where the sinner is set on sinning and there is no way to prevent him from sinning. I quote from his work *Against Lying (Contra Mendacium)*, to Consentius, 420:

"19. ...It does not follow that any is good because one is worse. He is worse who steals through coveting than he who steals through pity; but if all theft be sin, from all theft we must abstain. For who can say that people may sin even though one sin be damnable, another venial?"

⁴ 2:21 (105).

⁵ b. 1, § 6, 52-53.

Lot did not commit or approve of the sin nor did he induce or help the sinners to commit it.

“20. ...For who can doubt it to be a great sin if a father prostitute his own daughters to the fornications of the impious? And yet had there arisen a case in which a just man thought it his duty to do this, when the Sodomites with nefarious onset of lust were rushing upon his guests. For he said,

‘I have two daughters which have not known man: I will bring them out to you and do ye to them as is good in your eyes only unto these men do ye no wrong, for that they have come under covering of my roof.’ ”

Here St. Augustine unjustly and rashly refers to Lot as a pimp who prostituted his daughters. Hence he implies that Lot approved of the rape of his virgin daughters, as does a pimp who sells the services of prostitutes to men.

“What shall we say here? Do we not so abhor the wickedness which the Sodomites were attempting to do to the guests of the just man, that, whatever were done so this were not done, he should deem right to be done?”

Lot never thought that the potential rape of his two virgin daughters would have been right, would not have been a sin. If God had allowed it to happen, Lot no doubt would also have condemned the sin and sinners, just as the Levite did when his concubine was raped instead of men. (See in this article [The Levite’s offering his concubine to be raped](#), p. 8.):

“Very much also moveth us the person of the doer, which by merit of righteousness was obtaining deliverance from Sodom, to say that, since it is a less evil for women to suffer lewdness than for men, it even pertained to the righteousness of that just man that to his daughters he chose this rather to be done, than to his guests, not only willing this in his mind, but also offering it in word, and, if they should assent, ready to fulfill it in deed.”

Hence we see Augustine’s main error. He erroneously believes that it is always sinful to pray, hope, or plead that a lesser sin be committed rather than a greater sin and thus even in cases in which the sinner cannot be prevented from sinning:

“But then if we shall open this way to sins, that we are to commit less sins in order that others may not commit greater, by a broad boundary, nay rather with no boundary at all but with a tearing up and removing of all bounds, in infinite space, will all sins enter in and reign.”

Sin does not enter in and reign when a just man is forced to tolerate sin if it is not within his power to stop it. Sin has already entered in, the just man is trying to prevent greater or more numerous sins from entering in. And he does not approve of or commit the lesser sin nor induce or help the sinner commit it. But sin *does* enter in and reign in a nation that believes that men are justified and thus not guilty for committing a lesser sin to avoid a greater sin, which Lot did not believe.

“For when it shall be defined that a man is to sin less that another may not sin more, then, of course, by our committing thefts shall other men’s committing of lewdness be guarded against, and incest by lewdness; and if any impiety shall seem even worse than incest, even incest shall be pronounced meet to be done by us if in such wise it can be wrought that that impiety be not committed by others; and in each several kind of sins, both thefts for thefts, and lewdness for lewdness, and incest for incest, shall be accounted meet to be done; our own sins for other men’s, not only less for greater, but even if it come to the very highest and worst, fewer for more if

the stress of affairs so turns, that otherwise other men would not abstain from sin unless by our sinning, somewhat less indeed, but still sinning, so that in every case where an enemy who shall have power of this sort shall say: 'Unless thou be wicked, I will be more wicked; or unless thou do this wickedness, I will do more such,' we must seem to admit wickedness in ourselves if we wish to refrain (others) from wickedness. To be wise in this sort, what is it but to lose one's wits, or rather, to be downright mad? Mine own iniquity, not another's, whether perpetrated upon me or upon others, is that from which I must beware of damnation. For 'the soul that sinneth, it shall die.' "

Here St. Augustine correctly condemns the heresy which states that it is meet and thus good to commit a lesser sin to prevent a greater sin and thus whoever commits a lesser sin is not guilty of sin. And he correctly shows the evil consequences of this heresy in which all sins, except the greatest sin of all, are justified and thus enter in and reign. Yet this is not the case with Lot. Lot never thought it was meet and right and thus good and not sinful for his daughters to be raped! Nor did he think that the sinners would be innocent for raping his daughters!

"21. If then to sin, that others may not commit a worse sin, either against us or against any, without doubt we ought not; it is to be considered in that which Lot did, whether it be an example which we ought to imitate, or rather one which we ought to avoid. For it seems meet to be more looked into and noted, that when so horrible an evil from the most flagitious impiety of the Sodomites was impending over his guests, which he wished to ward off and was not able, to such a degree may even that just man's mind have been disturbed, that he was willing to do that which, not man's fear with its misty temper, but God's Law in its tranquil serenity, if it be consulted by us, will cry aloud, must not be done, and will command rather that we be so cautious not to sin ourselves, that we sin not through fear of any sins whatever of other men. For that just man, by fearing other men's sins, which cannot defile except such as consent thereto, was so perturbed that he did not attend to his own sin, in that he was willing to subject his daughters to the lusts of impious men. These things, when we read in holy Scriptures, we must not, for that we believe them done, therefore believe them meet to be done, lest we violate precepts while we indiscriminately follow precedents."

What was Lot's sin in this matter! Did he commit or approve of the sin? No. Did he induce the sinners to rape his daughters? No. Would he have helped the sinners to sin? No. And if the sin had happened, would he have condoned the sin and sinners? No, he would have condemned the sin and the sinners. Hence Lot did not hold the heresy that it is meet and good and thus not sinful to commit a lesser sin to avoid a greater sin, which St. Augustine accused him of having committed.

Again, St. Augustine's main error is that he wrongly condemns men who pray, hope, or plead that a lesser sin be committed to prevent a greater sin in cases when the sinners cannot be prevented from sinning. Therefore St. Augustine likewise condemns all the people in the examples given in this article, such as the widow who told sinners who were bent on committing the sin of rape to rape her instead of her virgin daughter. And by implication, and to be consistent, he would also have to hold the error that Catholics are forbidden to vote for lesser-evil laws and rulers. (See RJMI book *On Voting for the Lesser Evil*.)

The Levite's offering his concubine to be raped

And St. Augustine would have unjustly condemned the following Levite for offering the homosexual Benjamites his concubine to be raped instead of himself:

“While they were making merry and refreshing their bodies with meat and drink after the labour of the journey, the men [Benjamites] of that city, sons of Belial (that is, without yoke), came and beset the old man's house and began to knock at the door, calling to the master of the house and saying: Bring forth the man that came into thy house, that we may abuse him. And the old man went out to them, and said: Do not so, my brethren, do not so wickedly, because this man [the Levite] is come into my lodging, and cease, I pray you, from this folly. I have a maiden daughter, and this man hath a concubine, I will bring them out to you, and you may humble them and satisfy your lust, only, I beseech you, commit not this crime against nature on the man. They would not be satisfied with his words; which the man seeing, brought out his concubine to them, and abandoned her to their wickedness. And when they had abused her all the night, they let her go in the morning. But the woman, at the dawning of the day, came to the door of the house where her lord lodged, and there fell down.” (Jdg. 19:22-26)

Catholic Commentary on Jdg. 19:24: “**I have:** A similar proposal was made by Lot (Gen. 19:8). It is lawful to advise a man who is about to commit two crimes to be satisfied with the less: but we cannot persuade [induce] any one to do even the smallest offence, that good may ensue (Rom. 3:8).”

Inside vs. outside the confessional

A confessor must never counsel penitents to commit lesser sins to avoid greater sins because by God's grace and their cooperation they can avoid *all* sins. If a confessor gives this counsel in the confessional, then he is guilty not only of the lesser sin but also of heresy for denying the dogma that men can avoid all sin by God's grace and their cooperation. And he is also a heretic for denying the dogma that one of the conditions of a sincere and thus valid confession is that the penitent must have a firm purpose of amendment not to commit any sins. Hence by the priest telling a penitent he can commit a lesser sin to avoid a greater sin, he makes the penitent's confession invalid by destroying the penitent's firm purpose of amendment to not sin anymore and also induces the penitent to sin.

For example, a penitent tells his confessor that he is compelled to commit the sin of murder. The confessor must warn the penitent that if he does he will be guilty of mortal sin, but the confessor must not counsel the penitent to commit a lesser mortal sin of beating the man instead of murdering him. He must tell the penitent he can neither murder nor beat the man because both are sins even though murder is a greater sin.

Now, if the penitent does not listen to the confessor and leaves the confessional saying “I am going to murder him!” the confessor must first pray and hope that he does not commit any sin and that if he is bound to commit a sin then at least let it be only a beating and not murder. And if the confessor comes upon the man and sees that he is about to attack his victim, the confessor must first warn him to stop; and if the confessor sees that he is going to attack the man no matter what, then the confessor can say, “At least do not murder him!” This plea, then, is a mitigating plea, not a consensual plea. And if the man listens to the priest and thus only beats his victim instead of murdering him, then the

confessor must still condemn the man for committing a mortal sin for beating the man, while being thankful that he at least did not commit the greater sin of murder.

Now, the confessor did not commit nor approve of the lesser sin nor did he induce or help the man to sin. Instead, the priest mitigated a greater sin by preventing the greater sin of murder.

The difference between the unconditional counsel in the confessional as opposed to conditional counsel outside the confessional is that in the confessional the penitent must be willing to obey the confessor and thus obey God in all things and therefore be willing to amend his life and hence not commit any sin. And thus he must believe that by God's grace and his cooperation he does not have to commit any sin, mortal or venial. If the penitent does not have this disposition, then his confession is invalid and thus even if the confessor gives him absolution, his sins are not absolved, not remitted. If the confessor detects the penitent's sinful disposition, he must denounce the penitent for sinning in this matter and not give him absolution until the penitent confesses with the proper disposition. Outside the confessional, the confessor does not have the same power over the penitent, as the penitent is free to obey or disobey the confessor's counsel and the confessor cannot force the penitent to obey.

*For the greater glory of God, the honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
and the salvation of men.*

Original version: 7/2017; Current version: 7/2017

Mary's Little Remnant

302 East Joffre St.

Truth or Consequences, New Mexico 87901-2878, USA

Website: www.JohnTheBaptist.us

(Send for a free catalog)