

THREE GREAT SINS

Chapter One

The Bible mentions three specific sins that are of such nature that they carry a note of serious warning. Those guilty of committing such sins are under the dire judgment of God. The penalty for committing one of these sins is so severe, the consequences so grave, that every person, both the saved and unsaved, would do well to study the matter carefully to find out what God is talking about. Much grief and heartache could be avoided by an understanding of this subject.

In this, and the next three lessons, our study will be on what is perhaps the three most serious sins committed since the Garden of Eden. The terms used to describe these sins are familiar to most believers, and many unbelievers also. They are, (1) The blasphemy of the Holy Ghost (2) The unpardonable sin. (3) The sin unto death.

Let us keep in mind that the Bible teaches that there are three classes of people in the world today, the Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church of God.

“Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.” (I Corinthians 10:32)

By singling out these three offenses we are in no way minimizing the seriousness of other sins recorded in the Word of God. What youngster in Sunday School is not familiar with the record of the sin of Adam, that introduced sin into the world, with its accompanying results of physical and spiritual death; or the sin of Noah’s day that brought the judgment of God with a flood; or the repulsive sin of Sodom and Gomorrah that brought the swift judgment of God by wiping the cities from the face of the earth. Neither is our purpose one of sensationalism, to tickle the ears of those who are “ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

Our prayer is that we may be able to shed some light on a much misunderstood and controversial subject; and that you may be helped and blessed as you study the Word of God. If we mention some things that are new to you, instead of criticizing, why not pray for us, and we will pray for you.

The widespread disagreement on this particular subject indicates that we will encounter some difficulties as we face the matter. Therefore we must keep in mind that there are certain rules to remember in Bible study. We must first of all inquire as to whom the words are written. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God,” but all scripture is not given to the same individuals. A valuable rule of Bible study is to keep in mind that all scripture has a primary interpretation, specifically for those to whom it is written. All scripture is written FOR us, but not necessarily TO us. We must remember too, that all scripture has many secondary applications, and scripture often has a prophetic revelation.

The Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit

This particular sin, “blasphemy of the Holy Ghost,” is mentioned in three of the gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It is not found in the book of John, or the rest of the New Testament. This in itself tells us something about the sin of the “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.” Because of the controversial nature of the subject we will take our case

directly to the Word of God. Although we may not be able to answer all your questions, we will at least have been once more to the Book that has all the answers.

Varied Interpretations

The following commonly held interpretations of what constitutes this sin, blasphemy of the Holy Ghost, only serves as a warning that we must look to the Word and ask God to show us the truth.

The most common interpretation of this particular sin is that of rejecting Christ as Saviour. The scripture that is quoted is John 16, 8 and 9.

“And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:
Of sin, because they believe not on me.” (John 16: 8,9)

It is pointed out that this is the only sin that will actually condemn; and continually rejecting the Lord by rejecting the pleading of the Holy Spirit will result in hardness of the heart. The Holy Spirit will then cease to strive with the sinner. When this happens, we are told, there is no hope of one ever being saved. According to this interpretation, one who is guilty of this sin is not conscious of it, or concerned about it. We are told that as long as a person is concerned about the sin it has not been committed.

A second interpretation is that using the name of the Holy Spirit in vain constitutes the sin of “blasphemy of the Holy Ghost.” A third interpretation, according to some, is that of attributing the works of the Holy Spirit to the Devil. This, they tell us, is not only blasphemy of the Holy Ghost, but the unpardonable sin as well.

Then a fourth interpretation of this sin is that it was a dispensational sin, committed by the Nation of Israel, in the dispensation of the law. Which one is correct?

Undoubtedly there is some practical truth in all these interpretations. Each proponent of these interpretations has those who sincerely hold to their position. Let us try not to criticize and condemn all those who may not see eye to eye with us in every detail. If we differ, let us do so in the spirit of Christ. None of us can claim to know everything. When we differ it may be that we have not studied the matter thoroughly as we ought. There is one thing we know for a fact; whatever the exact meaning of our Lord’s words may be, they stand out as a warning to all of us, and is not to be taken lightly.

The Sin of the Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit

The first record of this sin is found in Matthew. These words were spoken by our Lord in answer to the Pharisee’s accusation that “Jesus healed and cast out devils by the power of Satan.”

“Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.
And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.” (Matthew 12:31,32)

Let us look closely at these verses for they hold the key to the understanding of the mystery that surrounds this subject. One little word gives us the key as to when this

sin was committed. The word translated “world” in this verse is the word “aeon” and means “age.” This, no doubt, will be in the reference margin of your Bible, or you can find it in any Greek dictionary. We can then read “whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this ‘age,’ neither in the ‘age’ to come.”

These words were spoken in the age, or dispensation of the law, which ended on the day of Pentecost. The expression “in the age to come” would refer to the present dispensation, the age in which we live, the “dispensation of grace.”

For this sin to be forgiven in the age to come, (which most people refer to as heaven, or eternity,) this sin would also have to be committed in the age to come. Now we know that the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost will not be committed in Heaven.

Now, who was it that committed this sin? We are told:

“But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of devils.” (Matthew 12:24)

The Pharisees were the religious ruling party in Israel and it was their responsibility to know and teach the truth.

Why is it more serious to sin against the Holy Ghost than the Son of man? Does not the Bible teach that they are equal? In 1st John it says:

“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” (I John 5:7)

Why, then, is the distinction made between sinning against the Son of man and sinning against the Holy Spirit? I believe the answer is found in recognizing that the Jewish leaders rejected the credentials that Jesus claimed. They rejected these because of ignorance.

God held the religious leaders responsible for seeking Christ’s death, yet He knew that they did not fully understand what they were doing; and Jesus even prayed on the cross, “...Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do...” (Luke 23:34)

The Bible says in Acts 3:17, and I am quoting now what Peter was telling the nation of Israel:

“And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.” (Acts 3:17)

Paul also tells us that they were in ignorance of the actual plan of Jesus Christ while He was here on earth.

“Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” (I Corinthians 2:8)

The nation of Israel was ignorant of the fact of what Jesus was going to do. They saw only, in the Old Testament, His coming to set up a Kingdom. For this they were excused, because of their ignorance, for the Bible says, “And the times of this ignorance God winked at...” (Acts 17:30a)

The religious leaders were so blinded by their own preconceived ideas about the Messiah, that they could not understand how Jesus could be their promised King and Redeemer. But these same individuals openly denied the miracles that Jesus performed, and actually said that these miracles were a product of Satan, even though they were wrought by the power of the Holy Spirit. This was NOT in ignorance. They made their accusations against better light and better knowledge. They directly contradicted the evidence before their eyes.

It was very obvious that Jesus was opposed to Satan, and through His works destroyed the power of Satan. To declare that these miracles was preformed by Satan was a deliberate sin against the Holy Spirit, and therefore inexcusable.

The rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah was due to ignorance, brought on by their religious tradition. To declare that the works Jesus did, by the power of the Holy Spirit, was done by Satan, was completely inexcusable. Therefore, we believe that the sin against the Holy Ghost was a particular national and dispensational sin; the sin of rejecting the offer of the Kingdom by Jesus Christ to His covenant people; with the result that they will not be forgiven and restored as a nation until after the age of “law” and the present age of “grace” have run their course. “And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written...” (Romans 11:26a)

The Bible tells us the different groups by which these three sins, “the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit,” “the unpardonable sin,” and “the sin unto death” were and may be committed.

“Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentles, nor to the Church of God.” (I Corinthians 10:32)

“Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost” was a sin committed by the nation of Israel (the Jews). “The unpardonable sin” (we use the word “unpardonable” only for the sake of clarity) is a sin committed by unbelievers (the Gentiles). “The sin unto death” is a sin committed only by believers (the Church of God.)

CHAPTER TWO

The Unpardonable Sin

If we were asked to name what we believe is the greatest sin in the world each of us, no doubt, would have our own idea as to what that sin might be. The Bible clearly defines specific sins. No child of God should be ignorant of that which is not pleasing to God. However, there are three specific sins, if committed, carry with them a note of finality and judgment. These three sins are, (1) Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. (2) The unpardonable sin. (3) The sin unto death. These three sins are the basic of these lessons.

In the previous chapter our subject was “the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.” In this lesson the subject is “the unpardonable sin.”

The expression “unpardonable sin” is not found in the Bible. The word “unpardonable” is a man-made term used to describe some specific sin, believed by some to seal the fate of those guilty of such transgression. As with all man-made terms, one is left to their own interpretation of what the “unpardonable sin” might be.

The Sins That Condemns

Does the Bible record a specific sin, if committed, that will never be forgiven? Can one who is guilty of such a sin ever be saved? Is it possible to go beyond the point of redemption? The Bible is crystal clear as to the ONE sin that condemns.

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

Of sin, because they believe not on me.” (John 16:7-9)

Jesus tells the disciples (verse 7) of the necessity of sending the Holy Spirit into the world. In verses 8, 13, and 14 he tells them the purpose of His coming. The work and ministry of the Holy Spirit in the dispensation of grace covers a wide spectrum. As we look at the different ministries of the Holy Spirit, each of which serves a definite purpose in God’s great plan, it is easy to get side-tracked on just one of the many offices in which He is to serve. However, the first and foremost ministry of the Holy Spirit is to reveal the one sin that condemns.

“And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” (John 16:8)

Jesus says the first work of the Holy Spirit is to reprove, (convict) the world of sin. Not sins, (plural), but sin, (singular). He tells us exactly (verse 9) what that specific sin is--- “because they believe not on me.” The sin that condemns is the sin of not believing on Christ. This is in complete harmony with the rest of the Word of God.

“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” (John 3:18)

“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” (John 3:36)

One is lost, then, not because of what they do, or what sins they commit, but what they do “not” do. They are lost because they do “not” believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore one cannot use the excuse of being to great a sinner to be saved. No, my friend, you are not lost because you are a drunkard, an adulterer, liar, thief, robber, or because of any vile outward manifestations of the flesh. You are lost because YOU DO NOT BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Certainly Christians are to abstain from sin. Furthermore, the Bible declares that a true Christian will strive to overcome sin.

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall

inherit the kingdom of God.

And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God.” (I Corinthians 6:9-11)

A child of God has the power, through Christ, to overcome sin. However, one does not overcome sin to become a Christian. The desire and power to overcome sin comes AFTER one has taken care of the greatest sin of all, “the sin of not believing on Christ, and receiving Him as Saviour.

I am afraid that somewhere along the line many who teach Bible separation for believers have left the impression that “separation” means “salvation.” Even some religious songs leave this mistaken idea. The song, “The Great Judgment Morning” tells how all mankind will one day stand before God. The poor will be saved and the rich will be lost. According to this song the condition for going to Heaven is to be poor.

The song, “Life’s Railway to Heaven,” tells us we “must make the run successful from the cradle to the grave.” Another more recent, and popular little chorus, “you can’t go to Heaven in a mini-skirt,” leaves the impression that all who do not wear mini-skirts will go to Heaven, or that it’s the mini-skirt that keeps one out of Heaven.

All the singing, preaching, praying, or programs can never make an unsaved person consistently live like a Christian ought to live. Even if we are successful in getting the unsaved to “straighten up and fly right;” without receiving Christ as Saviour, they would still be lost.

Too often we are like the preacher who prayed, “Lord, my little flock is prone to wander. Lord, my little flock is prone to gamble. Lord, my little flock is prone to gossip. Lord, my little flock is prone to cheat. O’ Lord, deliver them from the prone.”

When I started in Christian work, I made the mistake of assuming that every person who called themselves a Christian was interested in obeying the Word of God; and if they knew that something was sin they would put it out of their life. So, I preached on every sin that I could find in the Bible, (and a few that I couldn’t).

When a lost person hears a preacher telling those who call themselves Christians how to live, many times they apply this to their lives. Because of this we can understand why many give the excuse for not becoming a Christian as “to many hypocrites in the church.” Or they say, “I don’t want to become a Christian until I can live the life.” To add to the confusion; many churches give four or five invitations, all in one; and again the unsaved person is not sure whether to “join the church,” “be baptized,” “rededicate their life,” “be one-hundred percent behind the preacher,” “confess their sin,” or what. God help us to make the way of salvation plain!

If you do not have eternal life it is because of one sin, and only one—the sin of not believing on Jesus Christ. Although the term “unpardonable sin” is not mentioned in the Bible, the Bible does teach, however, that it is a very dangerous thing to continually reject Christ as Saviour. If you do not know Christ as your Saviour you are condemned already. You are at this very moment under the sentence of eternal death. Hear what the Word of God says:

“He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” (John 3:18)

“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son.” (I John 5:10)

“He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” (I John 5:12)

The work of the Holy Spirit is to reveal, or manifest the Lord Jesus as Saviour.

“All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.” (John 16:15)

No person will ever come to Christ apart from the work of the Holy Spirit.

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.” (John 6:44)

The Lord Jesus is not revealed by science, logic, reason, or even creation. If you see your need of receiving the Lord as Saviour it will be by the revelation of the Holy Spirit, using the Word of God. The greatest sin that you can commit is rejecting Jesus Christ. Moreover, God says, “My Spirit shall not always strive with man.” (Genesis 6:3) There comes a time when the Holy Spirit will no longer strive. God’s warning **MUST** be taken seriously.

“For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (II Corinthians 6:2)

“He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” (Proverbs 29:1)

“Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.” (Proverbs 27:1)

Our Lord warned the Pharisees of this very same danger.

“Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. (John 8:21)

“I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.” (John 8:24)

We have no way of knowing when God will say, “that’s enough,” and the Holy Spirit will no longer strive. One cannot be saved apart from the Holy Spirit. It is therefore our responsibility to warn you that it is possible to wait too long. If you are not saved this could happen to you.

I believe if you could see the seriousness of the one sin that condemns you would not hesitate but would, at this very moment, do something about it. The worse thing that could happen to you would be for you to die in your sins. This is especially true, because it is absolutely unnecessary for you to die in your sins.

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” (Acts 10:9)

CHAPTER THREE

When A Christian Sins

In this series of messages we are dealing with a subject that has caused untold heartache and much confusion. Our mail confirms our conviction of the necessity of dealing with this subject.

Our purpose in teaching this series of lessons on The Three Great Sins, “the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit,” “the unpardonable sin,” and “the sin unto death,” is, first of all, we want those who will not receive the Lord Jesus for salvation because they believe they have committed the unpardonable sin, to know this excuse is without scriptural foundation. Second, we want believers to understand that although we are saved by grace, and kept by grace, God has a way of dealing with a disobedient Christian.

The confusion that surrounds this subject comes in part from a failure to make a definite distinction between these three sins. It will help in our understanding of this subject if we keep in mind that the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, the unpardonable sin, and the sin unto death are three distinct, separate sins, committed by three different classes of people.

“Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.” (I Corinthians 10:32)

The “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit” was committed by the nation of Israel, the Jews. The “unpardonable sin,” (we use this term only for the sake of clarity) is committed by the Gentiles, the term used to describe unbelievers. The “sin unto death” can be committed by the believer, the Church of God.

In the two previous lessons we dealt with the sin of “the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit” and “the unpardonable sin.” We will devote the next two lessons in this series on “the sin unto death.” Because of the nature of this sin, “the sin unto death,” there is a need for a clear understanding of what this sin is, and how it is committed.

Since the “sin unto death” is a sin that can be committed by a Christian, there are a number of questions, I am sure, that will arise. First of all, do Christians sin? There are those who tell us that they are entirely without sin, that the old nature has been eradicated both root and branch. Yet these are the same folks who tell us that one may fall and finally be lost, after having reached such a state of perfection. If this is the case, where, may I ask, does the temptation to sin come from? It certainly does not come from the new nature “that cannot sin.” What does the scriptures say about this?

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” (I John 1:8)

“If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” (I John 1:10)

What could be more plain? John is speaking to believers, and includes himself. He says, “If WE say that WE have no sin...”

For a person to claim sinless perfection, according to the Word of God, is a gross deception. The language of I John, verses 8 and 10 are strong words indeed, yet they are written so even a child can understand. To claim sinless perfection, says the apostle John, is to “make God a liar, and to be void of His Word.” This is a serious charge. One who claims they are without sin is not only guilty of calling God a liar, but they are absolutely void of the truth. I would dare not repeat such a statement apart from the clear teaching of the Word of God.

Read what the apostle Paul says, after he had been saved for thirty years.

“For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.” (Romans 7:15)

“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.” (Romans 7:18)

Paul made no claim of reaching sinless perfection in the flesh, but on the contrary. He did not deny, or attempt to cover up the presence of the old nature. It is Paul who tells us more about how to deal with, and how to overcome the old sinful nature than any other writer.

“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” (Galatians 5:16,17)

Paul spoke also of crucifying the old nature. It was Paul who said, “I die daily,” meaning he must daily do battle with the old nature.

When a person is saved God does not in any way change or alter the old sinful nature of which they were born, but instead gives a brand new nature. This brings us to the very heart of our lesson today, the conflicting interpretation of two key scriptures on sin in the Christian life.

In 1st John, chapter 1, verse 8, we read:

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” (I John 1:8)

In 1st John, chapter 3, verse 9, we read:

“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” (I John 3:9)

It says in I John, chapter 1, verse 8, that a person who claims to be without sin is not saved—period! While it says in I John, chapter 3, verse 9 that one who is born of

God cannot sin! How is it possible to reconcile these two verses? Both verses are God's Word; therefore, both verses are true.

Many Bible teachers have tried to explain I John 3:9 by saying that the word for "sinning" in this verse is in the "continuous tense," and means to practice sin. But the text says nothing about practicing sin. The statement is plain---"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin..." The one of whom John is speaking CANNOT sin. This verse teaches that it is impossible for such a one to commit even ONE SIN. Notice the verse carefully. "WHOSOEVER IS BORN OF GOD DOTHT NOT COMMIT SIN; for his seed remaineth in him: AND HE CANNOT SIN, BECAUSE HE IS BORN OF GOD."

This is no great mystery, and certainly no contradiction. The answer is simple, when taken in the light of the rest of the scriptures. The language of these verses reveal the meaning.

"If WE say that WE have no sin, WE deceive ourselves..." (John 1:8) The language of the verse tells us that John is talking about the old man, born of the flesh. John is only repeating the truth revealed by the Lord Jesus to Nicodemus in John chapter 3, verse 6---"that which is born of the flesh is flesh." This is reaffirmed by Paul in Romans chapter 7, verse 18, "For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing..." The flesh (the old nature) can do nothing to please God. The flesh will never be anything else but flesh; lustful, sinful flesh. I John, 1, verse 8 is referring to this old nature.

Now compare the structure of verse 9 (I John, 3:9) "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin." WHY? "For his seed remaineth in him and he cannot sin." Here John is speaking of the new nature.

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." (I Peter 1:23)

What happens to one who is born of the Spirit?

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (II Corinthians 5:17)

When you receive the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour you receive a nature that is absolutely sinless. It is impossible for this nature to commit even one sin.

When a person is born again, the old man, born of the flesh, is neither eradicated nor altered, nor replaced by the new nature. It remains unchanged. Instead of repairing the old nature, God creates within every believer a new, holy, sinless nature. The old nature will be with us until our journey here is ended. Then the sinful flesh will be destroyed forever.

The presence of the two natures in the believer is the reason for the struggle within every Christian. The old nature is continually there to tempt us to sin. The new nature always seeks to please God. A serious mistake made by many Christians is that they fail to recognize that the old nature is still present. If you have just become a Christian, you, no doubt, are conscious of a conflict at this very moment. All the forces of evil may seem to be arrayed against you. This is normal. It is a sign of spiritual life.

Even at those times when we live in the closest Spiritual fellowship with God, and seem to have complete victory over the old nature, with its passions and temptations, we must still be constantly on guard. We must be on guard because the old nature can suddenly assert itself and cause us to fall at the very moment when we seem to be the most secure. So if you, as a Christian, wonder why you have such a struggle day by day, so often fail and fall, and are overcome by temptations at times, remember, the old man is still there. We are never to ignore him. This is one of the most dangerous things that we can do.

“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other...” (Galatians 5:16,17)

CHAPTER FOUR

The Sin Unto Death

Does the Bible teach such a thing as a “sin unto death” for the believer? Is there a sin, if committed by a person who is born again, which would result in God taking that Christian out of the world prematurely, through death? If so, what is that sin? I believe that we can show from the Word of God that there is a sin, if committed, which will result in the premature death of the believer.

I realize that this is not a popular subject, but it is certainly one that should be taught. We are not bringing these lessons in a condemning or threatening spirit, but in hope that it will enlighten believers, not only to their responsibility, but to the privilege that God has entrusted to us. To fully understand why God will resort to the extreme measure of taking a believer home prematurely, we must first understand God’s plan and purpose for us after we are saved.

To Bring Glory To God

God’s purpose is to manifest ALL THAT HE IS through His children. We are, in everything that we do, to reflect the glory of God. Consider the teaching in these following Scriptures.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works,
AND GLORIFY YOUR FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN.” (Matthew 5:16)

“What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?
For ye are bought with a price: THEREFORE GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR BODY, AND IN YOUR SPIRIT, WHICH ARE GOD’S.” (I Corinthians 6:19,20)

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, DO ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD.” (I Corinthians 10:31)

It is a very serious thing to call oneself a Christian and not live like it. However, to be a Christian, and not obey is to invite the chastening hand of God.

“He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three

witnesses:

Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be through 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?" (Hebrews 10:28,29)

There should be no need for God to have to resort to such an extreme measure. God has made abundant provision for cleansing; that we may walk in fellowship with Him, and fulfill His purpose. The greatest testimony to the saving grace of God is an obedient Christian, and the poorest testimony is a worldly, selfish, self-centered, rebellious, backslidden Christian. We only manifest the glory of God as we walk in fellowship with Him.

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."
(John 1:7)

Because of God's abundant provision there is therefore no excuse for a Christian not to walk in fellowship. God is aware of the unholy alliance of the world, the flesh, and the Devil, united in their efforts to defeat His purpose THROUGH CHRISTIANS. He has provided a way whereby we should not be defeated. We have, recorded in the Word, five ways in which God deals with sin in the Christian's life.

Step Number One

The first thing that God did for us was to restrict, or limit, Satan in how far he can tempt the Christian. Every Christian ought to be aware of the war Satan wages against believers. However, God has placed certain limits upon Satan.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:
Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." (I Peter 5:8,9)

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (I Corinthians 10:13)

Some Christians are stronger than others, therefore able to resist more. In the case of Job, God permitted Satan to do with Job whatever he pleased, except take his life. Satan also made a special request to have Peter, so he could sift him as wheat.

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." (Luke 22:31)

First of all, God says, "Don't give in to temptation---don't sin!"

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not..." (I John 2:1a)

Step Number Two

What happens when a Christian yields to temptation? God has made provision for believers when they sin.

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” (1st John 2:1,2)

The moment the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, we must immediately confess the sin.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1st John 1:9)

What happens if the Christian neglects, or forgets to confess and receive the necessary cleansing; or does not recognize the sin that breaks fellowship? Here again, God provides for just such weakness, as we see in step number three.

Step Number Three

The third provision of an all-wise God to keep His children in fellowship, is a memorial. Yes, God instituted a sure cure for the cold, hard, and indifferent heart.

“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.” (I Corinthians 11:23-25)

If any Christian can look at the Cross and see the awesome price Christ paid for sin, and still be unmoved, something is wrong. Observing this memorial, the Lord's Supper, should bring any Christian to a realization of the necessity of walking in fellowship. This is the purpose of this memorial. Before we observe this memorial, we are to examine ourselves.

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.” (I Corinthians 11:28)

Observing this memorial is not optional with the believer. The Bible commands “This do in remembrance of me.” After self-examination a Christian ought to see their sin and take care of it.

Suppose a believer does not respond to these provisions? If a Christian does not yield to the Word of God through these first three provisions made for him, then God must turn to the fourth provision—chastening.

“And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art

rebuked of him:

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.” (Hebrews 12:5-8)

The purpose of this chastening is stated in verse 11, of Hebrews chapter 12.

“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” (Hebrews 12:11)

God Will Have His Children Clean

The plain teaching of Hebrews 12 is that EVERY CHILD OF GOD is chastened. This answers the question of what happens when a Christian sins. If a Christian yields to chastening he is brought back into fellowship.

What happens when a Christian will not repent and confess his sin? What if a Christian does not yield to chastening? God will then exercise the extreme measure of taking a believer home through death. Every student of the Bible knows that the Bible teaches that there is a “sin unto death.”

“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.” (I John 5:16)

Here the language is plain. John is talking about the believer. “If any man see his BROTHER...” We see the same thing in the book of James.

“Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins. (James 5:19,20)

Here too, we are told, “BRETHREN, if any of you do err from the truth...” Moreover, the Bible bears testimony to specific sins that resulted in the premature death of believers. For instance, the death of Ananias and Sapphira is a clear example of God calling home disobedient believers.

“But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles’ feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? (Acts 5:1-3)

The “sin unto death” of Ananias and Sapphira was not keeping back part of the price of the land, but LYING TO THE HOLY SPIRIT.

“Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.” (Acts 5:9)

Disorder at the Lord’s table not only resulted in the chastening hand of God, but for some it was the “sin unto death.”

“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.”
(I Corinthians 11:30)

“...and many sleep.” God actually took some of these believers home.

The same was also true of the man living in open immorality.

“It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife.” (I Corinthians 5:1)

According to Paul, this was a common sin among the believers at Corinth. According to II Corinthians, some repented; but notice what happened to at least one who was guilty of this sin.

“In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,
To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” (I Corinthians 5:4,5)

We have seen at least three sins that resulted in the death of those who were guilty; lying to the Holy Spirit, disorder at the Lord’s table, and fornication. Which of these sins was the “sin unto death?” All of these sins were a “sin unto death.” Has God taken home, through death, all that have been guilty of such sins? Of course not. What, then, is the difference? We find the answer in Hebrews, chapter 12.

“Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?” (Hebrews 12:9)

The first part of Hebrews, chapter 12, is talking about chastening. If a believer does not yield to chastening, God will use a more drastic measure.

Lest I be misunderstood, when God prematurely takes a believer home, it is still an act of grace. It is far better for a Christian to be in glory than to be a stumbling block to others.

Only God knows who will not yield to chastening; therefore, we cannot make a judgment. We cannot know if a professed believer, who is living in open sin, is a disobedient believer, or just a religious lost person. We can, however, teach the seriousness and possible consequences of one not yielding to God’s chastening.

Loss Of Rewards

Besides a Christian having their life shortened, there is loss of rewards. Having one's life shortened, and not being able to tell the story of Jesus is tragic.

“Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble. Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” (I Corinthians 3:12-15)

The most tragic of all is for anyone to go into eternity lost. Where will you spend eternity? Why don't you make sure that Heaven will be your home, by receiving God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” (Romans 10: 9,10)