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Volume XVIII
Issue 445

The "Unpardonable Sin"

(Part 2)

by — J.W. Williams

Therefore I am saying to you, "Every sin and blasphemy shall be pardoned men, yet the blasphemy of the spirit shall not be pardoned. And whosoever may be saying a word against the Son of Mankind, it will be pardoned him, yet whoever may be saying aught against the holy spirit, it shall not be pardoned him, neither in this eon nor in that which is impending (Matthew 12:31-32).

ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS WAS NOT PARDONED

As to their non-pardon, of which Joshua warned them, it did occur in their being subjected to the pagan nations in Canaan during the rule of the Judges. Such calamities came unerringly whenever they sinned. Yet though that again should be called "unpardonable" by those who thus speak, the fact is noteworthy that those sinning Israelites were still shown mercy whenever they cried out under the yoke of those foreign masters, and pardoned when God answered by raising up a judge who delivered them from the yoke. In all of their troubles and dying there was the prospect of eventual mercy in resurrection. "For His mercy endureth forever."

KING SAUL'S UNPARDONED SIN

Another case of unpardoned sin that may be considered is that of King Saul. God took mercy away from him (II Samuel 7:15). When that was his doom, he was "put away," as this Scripture says, and died in the battle of Mt. Gilboa. Yet all death is temporary, therefore the acts of those who thus sinned unto death are not "unpardonable."

King Saul's case should enforce unfailingly on our conviction the comforting assurance that, if we had sinned unto death, we should not be kept alive long, weary years worrying about it. If we had sinned unto death, we should be

dead; but in this dispensation of transcendent grace to us of the nations, God is not smiting people dead as He did in other eras. No one is now sinning unto death. That makes so-called "unpardonable sin" impossible at this time.

DAVID'S "UNPARDONABLE SIN"

The same idea as that concerning Saul is seen in the case of David. If God had not "put away" his sin, he would have died (II Samuel 12:13). He unwittingly sentenced himself to death (:5), as the law of Moses, of which he was the royal judge, provided it for his double sin of adultery and murder. His death then would have been penal, inflicted for "sin unto death." All who were thus condemned by the law of Moses had to die "without pity" (Hebrews 10:28). So here in David's case there was "sin unto death" that was pardoned at once, and the offender did not die, after all. The divine Judge could modify the sentence as He saw fit.

Another thing about David's case should be noted carefully. After he was pardoned, he was immediately sentenced to four penalties other than death for his double sin; two penalties for a sin, which is the divine order for

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Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

ISSN: 1936-9360

Volume XVIII, No. 445 – April 22, 2014

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- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
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 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
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**UNPARDONABLE** (continued from front page)

that time. Though the death-penalty he pronounced on himself was remitted, his sins were sorely visited with these four judgments: the death of Bath-sheba's child; the adultery of his wives in the future as a consequence of his adultery; life-long wars and rebellion in his own family as a result of having Uriah slain in war; and Absalom's rebellion being the sorest trial of the four. He was unpardoned from these four visitations; but while those who say "unpardonable," instead of "unpardoned" temporarily, should call David's state hopeless, yet the divine Judge has already settled his case favorably in the verdict that David is assured a "better resurrection" and being "made perfect" (Hebrews 11), when he will again be king over Israel (Ezekiel 37:24).

In the gospel sense, Israel, Moses, Saul and David were neither pardoned nor unpardoned, much less "unpardonable," because they were merely subjected to temporary penalties outside of the jurisdiction of the gospel.

Israel's expectation, against which they sinned, was that of the privilege of entering Canaan, not of being saved to future life, and their penalty for disobedience was temporary death until future resurrection.

The sin of Moses was not disbelief of the gospel, but disobedience of the command to speak to the rock the second time, as in the first case, instead striking it.

THE "SIN UNTO DEATH" CALLS FOR DEATH

Moses' death sentence, like Israel's, is temporary, for he is listed in Hebrews 11 as an heir of future glory. David's sin was disobedience of the sixth and seventh commandments of the law, not disbelief of the gospel. The death-penalty he unwittingly pronounced on himself, which was remitted, left him. Yet these four penalties all pertained to this present life, and have no bearing at all on his future, except that they fitted him for that glorious destiny by perfecting him through suffering.

Then let those who have been anxious over whether they have committed "the unpardonable sin" take comfort, encouragement and hope from the very evident fact that, if they had sinned "unto death" they would be dead, and not alive and worrying over their too-limited view of God's goodness and mercy; for even if they had been smitten dead for "sin unto death" (which does not occur in our time of visitation under grace, not law), there would still be the future resurrection to anticipate.

This covers the case of suicides, also. It is unfortunate that some people cannot see that every stormy cloud has sunshine after it, and do not realize the words of the wise man, "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small" (Proverbs 24:10). Our homes and schools devote much time and attention to physical and intellectual education, but entirely neglect training in emotional control, though that lack is the chief cause of suicide. There is always something good to anticipate. Let everyone who faints in the day of adversity remember that: seek strength from above and realize that, if we hold on a little while, we come to better things, when we shall be very glad that we did not give up in despair.

Some interpreters hold that suicide is "the unpardonable sin." So, with all of these variant and contradictory assertions, it is time that the Bible-reading public wakes up and realizes what an unscriptural tradition has been heaped on the heads of the heirs of the apostasy, and see if "unpardonable sin" is a scriptural phrase, or one invented by those who insufficiently search God's Word and wrongly divide much of what they do read.

"BACKSLIDING" IS NOT "UNPARDONABLE"

Some small denominations that do not believe in the direct work of God's spirit in conversion, and therefore do not hold the general view that resisting the spirit's call to it is "the unpardonable sin," generally think that such sin is "backsliding" from the gospel, that is, from what they think is the gospel, which would be backsliding from their denominational teaching. They base their conclusion on gloomy interpretations of three sections in the Hebrew epistle (chapters 6, 10 and 12:17). We shall therefore examine these citations as our next part of this study.

Esau's "no place of repentance" (Hebrews 12:17) was not in the gospel sense, but only failure to change Isaac's blessing. He did regret, but his father could not turn back. The idea of backsliding is based on the word "fall away" (Hebrews 6:6), and the supposedly hopeless condition of such backsliders is explained by the interpretation put upon the warnings to such who "sin willfully," for whom there remains no more sacrifice for sins (10:26).

GLOOMY WORDS IN HEBREWS

In studying this matter we should first of all remember that this epistle was not written to us. We are not "Hebrews." Therefore, when these Scriptures are used to ►

worry us, there is a wrong dividing of the Word in its “application,” as people call it.

What would you think of a poor simpleton who had cut himself by a careless use of the sword of the spirit, and would now immediately go to the medicine cupboard, get a mustard plaster and attempt to remedy his wound by “applying” it to the spot that hurt? That was made and intended for very different patients, to whom it would be very valuable. Well, that is precisely what these do who worry themselves with such dark writings. It is time we learn not to “apply” mustard to ourselves when we are not the proper subjects for it.

The next thing necessary for understanding these ominous warnings is to discern the general purpose of the Hebrew epistle, for that throws light on any portion of it. The purpose is not stated in just so many words, so we must examine it as a whole in order to discern it. When we do that, we find the following facts:

The believers in the gospel of the kingdom, chosen from among Israel, expected it to come in their lifetime (Luke 19:11, 38; Mark 11:10). So, when the King was crucified, they gave up hope. Then, when their faith and expectation rose from deadness at His resurrection (I Peter 1:3), they thought the kingdom might come immediately (Acts 1:6), and His answer to their question about it did not enlighten them enough to know that it would not. The need for encouragement in their uncertainty is therefore evident, and Christ’s answer to them implied that, at the coming of the spirit at Pentecost, there would be further light on the matter. So the writer of Hebrews would be expected to give them that encouragement.

Turning now to that epistle, we do find just such a

background. At the end of one of the very sections we are studying we find such encouragement (10:32-39), pointing forward to the return of the King. Then in 12:28 there is more encouragement, definitely promising that kingdom, as one that cannot be shaken by the political earthquake cited in Haggai’s prophecy there quoted. This promise follows a warning similar to those we are studying (12:25), and another threat is given at the close of this section (12:29).

THE PURPOSE OF THE HEBREWS EPISTLE: IT IS NOT WRITTEN TO US

A general survey of the Hebrews epistle shows the same idea of encouragement to faithfulness permeating the whole book. Eight things are pointed out that are “better” than what they had under the law. Also, the writer takes up the superiority of the King over every other of the various ones with whom He is compared – messengers, Moses, Aaron, sacrifices, tabernacle, law, and every other consideration that might cause disappointment over their wait for the kingdom. Then, in conclusion, follows a list of examples of faithful ones in like circumstances (chapter 11), called “witnesses” (12:1) in probation like theirs.

Their expectation that the King would set up the kingdom in the days of His flesh was based on the sight of the kingdom miracles that were a foretaste of it. Therefore, if they gave up in disappointment after seeing the wonders they saw, nothing greater could be given to them to renew them to faith. They had been renewed once after the resurrection of the King – they had seen the greatest that could be seen so far. Yet the fact that they had “backslidden” once into loss of faith when He was crucified should show modern interpreters that backsliding is not “the unpardonable sin,” for those back-



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sliding disciples were renewed when the King rose from death. However, if, after that, they gave up because of weariness in waiting or from persecution for “hyphenated loyalty” (Acts 17:7), nothing more could be done (at that time) to renew them. The greatest evidence of the divinity of their hope was the crucifixion and resurrection of their King. If, therefore, that did not hold them, they would be asking, so to speak, for a renewal of the cross, and that is probably why the writer speaks of crucifying the Lord afresh.

Those Hebrew disciples had “tasted the heavenly gift” of the miraculous powers of the holy spirit, “the powers of the future eon” (6:4-5). That was the acme of evidence then. Lapse from faith at that time would be incurable until greater sights could be given in the kingdom itself.

Since it was unbelief that crucified Him the first time, the unbelief that threatened these believers was spoken of as crucifying Him afresh, which would thus “*put Him to an open shame.*”

Notice that we say that nothing else could be done for them “at that time.” This does not mean that nothing can be done for such in the future. The millennium will convince by much greater evidence because of sight, for then the kingdom will be here in reality and not only in foretaste. Since Sodom would have repented if it had seen the kingdom miracles (Matthew 11:20-24), it is clear that a progression of greater and greater wonders would, and will, convince all who come under such influence. Therefore, in the future kingdom, those who backslid because of insufficient sight to hold them by the power of the kingdom signs can be yet impressed then. The only reason for not giving them such a “second opportunity” (or shall we say third, since they gave up at the crucifixion) is stern justice that would say, “You had your opportunity once, and lost out, so now be gone.” We have not tasted what they had. We belong to the nations and are not “Hebrews.” We cannot sin against sight, as they did. We walk by unadulterated faith (II Corinthians 5:7). We cannot backslide from the transcendent grace given to us (Romans 8:28-39), nor from gifts we never possessed, nor from sights we never saw.

HOPE FOR ALL IN THE FUTURE

The “willful” sinning (10:26) is connected in the context with this same idea of faith (:23), and at the end of the chapter it is designated as “drawing back” in unbelief (:38), or, as we say, “backsliding.” Here again faith is cited as the contrary, and, as in chapter six, the idea is now

pressed that there is no more sacrifice for sin than that at Golgotha, so that, if that did not hold these Hebrew disciples, no other sacrifice could be given to preserve them in faith. These considerations should prompt us not to filch Israel’s Scriptures and make ourselves trouble by “applying” stolen irritants to our wounds, when we have the balm of Gilead that heals all of our ills.


Since all of these cases of unpardoned sin or “sin unto death” were different, it should be evident that there is not just one “unpardonable sin,” but “an” unpardoned one in each separate case.

So then, after paying the double penalty of death and suffering that the divine Judge has imposed on sin, all previously unpardoned (not “unpardonable”) sinners will be like criminals whom an executive official cannot pardon, but who go free after serving their sentence. After they have endured the future judgment, they will be free to a finality, because penal law will have no further claim on them.

It is to be hoped that this exposition may contribute something to the peace of mind of any readers who may have been distressed over this matter, as so many have, even to despair. Nothing in all of the universe can separate you from God’s love (Romans 8:35-39). You cannot even separate yourself from it by your sin, for it was for needy sinners that a Father’s love sent His Son (John 3:16). It is a “four-dimension” love: length, breadth, height and depth (Ephesians 3:18), for it is as long as the ages, as broad as the human race, as high as heaven and deeper than hades.

So let any who have worried over “unpardonable sin” cast away all fear in perfect love, and rejoice in the infinite mercy of a heavenly Father’s loving kindness that never wearies, and that will accomplish the full salvation which His wisdom has designed. ■

[edited]



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Teaching and Deportment

Can a Corrupt Source Produce a Good Product?

by — Dan Sheridan

Teaching is essential, deportment flows from teaching. That's Scripture truth.

Romans 1-11 is teaching.

Romans 12-16 is deportment.

Ephesians 1-3 is teaching.

Ephesians 4-6 is deportment.

Correct teaching leads to deportment in harmony with the teaching. Fruit comes from light, light doesn't come from fruit (Ephesians 5:9). Religion reverses this order.

This is why those who believe Paul's evangel make a fatal mistake when they maintain the "old morality" of the Christian religion. What they're saying is that proper deportment can be attained without sound teaching. They have rightly judged that the "doctrinal" teachings of Christianity are in error, yet they have not examined the "morality" of Christianity which is based on that evil teaching.

This leads to a works-based religion that denies the importance of truth in favor of self-imposed "moralities." These "moralities" are usually based on "tastes" and "refinements," NOT Scripture. Make no mistake: once you emphasize "behavior" over teaching, you



have forsaken Paul and the Celestials and descended to earth with its soulish, self-righteous, human religion. Truth is abandoned, externals dominate.

My friend Phillip Garrison had a great illustration:

A natural spring is trustworthy. If you're on a hike you have no problem filling your canteen with it. But if you go to a swamp and fill your canteen you will never rid the foul source of all its contaminants. If you begin with a corrupt water source, you will never have true purity.

The "god" of eternal torment is a monster! The "Jesus" of orthodoxy is an effeminate weakling. This foul source will never be rid of its contaminants. To expect correct behavior from such a foul source is to be deceived.

A person who believes the correctly cut and correctly translated Scriptures must dump orthodox Christianity *and* its "moralities." If the "Christian" Religion is Corrupt – so are its "moral" teachings. ■

[For further reading on religious, man-made "morality," see *How Scriptural Is "Morality"?* by Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. [BSN #402](#).]

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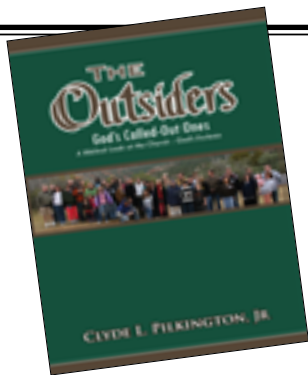


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The Outsiders: God's Called-Out Ones – A Biblical Look at the Church – God's Ecclesia

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

In 1995, after sixteen years of being in the “pastorate” the author walked away. He left the “religious system” by resigning from the very “church” and “ministry” he had formed. In many ways this work is a testament to these actions. This testimony was thirty years in the making – the results of a spiritual journey that the author found to be common to other saints scattered throughout the world and across history. This is an opportunity to explain why some who love the Lord no longer “go to church.” It does not seek to persuade others to do something different; but rather to be simply who and what they already are “in Him.” This is an uncovering of the truth of the church, and an encouragement for the members of His Body to enjoy the position and standing “in Christ” that they already possess, realizing that they are truly “complete in Him” (Colossians 2:10), that He alone is their Life (Colossians 3:4), and that His Life is full of freedom (Galatians 5:1).

The Outsiders was very encouraging. Thanks for your thoughts and study on the true Body of Christ and the lonely road we travel at times. – **MO**

I thank God for *The Outsiders*. I couldn't put it down. Read it all in one sitting. – **PA**

The Outsiders has something different about it. Upon finishing it an awareness has taken hold of my mind and spirit – a “knowing” that I have been afforded a special measure of His grace in just being allowed to be exposed to the truth contained within. – **KS**