

BIBLE TRUTHS EXPLAINED

What God's Word teaches about

SIN

Gordon Lyons

KJV Edition

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Sin

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I must acknowledge a genuine debt of gratitude to the work of Dr. Charles Hodge. The writings of this theologian from a previous generation have helped considerably in preparing this work. On a number of occasions—as will be seen when reading these studies—I have cited or alluded to Dr. Hodge's remarks in his three-volume *Systematic Theology*. These references have been acknowledged in the footnotes to the study text.

Sin

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Part 1

Synopsis: Sin

Sinful thoughts and practices originate in man's corrupt mind (or heart). Sin is not only *deliberate* wrongdoing. All kind of wrongdoing is sin; including the failure to do the good that we ought to do. All coming short of God's righteous requirements or demands is sin. This includes failure to observe God's moral standards. It includes mistakes and errors. It includes deliberately transgressing (i.e. overstepping the bounds of) God's standard of righteousness. Sin also includes iniquity, or the wilful and deliberate practice of sin, or the practice of particularly evil or heinous acts. Again, sin includes lawlessness or disregard for both the civil law and God's law; and it includes unrighteousness or a general disregard for moral order or decency. All forms of sin incur guilt, making men justly liable to punishment. The penalty of sin is death—*spiritual, physical, and eternal* death. Excepting Christ alone, every human being is guilty of sin—in thought, attitude, word, and deed.

Note 1

No-one is Righteous

Sinful thoughts and sinful behaviour—which are common to all humanity—are part of man's fallen human nature. Because of the Fall, everyone has inherited from Adam a depraved (totally corrupted) and morally polluted nature. No one is righteous: not even one person. In saying that everyone is depraved or morally polluted by the Fall, this is not to imply that everyone is thoroughly sinful or as bad as it is possible to be. Clearly, this is not the case; nor does God's Word teach otherwise. Every one of us, however, has a polluted and sinful nature; and from that nature, and to varying degrees, everyone commits different sinful acts, they indulge in sinful thoughts, and they engage in sinful speech. Thus, everyone is unrighteous in God's eyes, and stands justly condemned by God's holy and righteous law.

Scripture References

Romans 3:10-18

- (10) As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:
- (11) There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.
- (12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. *{Psalms 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Eccles. 7:20}*
- (13) Their throat *is* an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps *is* under their lips: *{Psalm 5:9; Psalm 140:3}*
- (14) Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness: *{Psalm 10:7}*
- (15) Their feet *are* swift to shed blood:
- (16) Destruction and misery *are* in their ways:
- (17) And the way of peace have they not known: *{Isaiah 59:7,8}*
- (18) There is no fear of God before their eyes. *{Psalm 36:1}*

Mark 7:20-23

⁽²⁰⁾ And he [Jesus] said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. ⁽²¹⁾ For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, ⁽²²⁾ Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: ⁽²³⁾ All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

Note 2

Born in Sin

Everyone born into the world in the usual way (i.e. by natural procreation), is born with the guilt and pollution of original sin, and with an inherently corrupt nature. This is not to imply that there is anything sinful with natural relations, or with conception or birth. Clearly, these are God-given functions and gifts, to be used lovingly and honourably. When the Bible says that everyone is born in sin, it means that he or she has been born with a sinful nature and with an inward disposition or tendency to sin. This disposition to sin results from the fallen and corrupt nature that Adam transmitted to all humanity because of his sin and rebellion against God. God does not hold Adam and Eve's descendants personally responsible for their first parent's *actual* and *specific* sin. Nonetheless, all mankind shares in the penalty and consequences of that sin. The consequences includes the corruption of nature that their first parents brought upon themselves.

Scripture References

Genesis 8:21

⁽²¹⁾ And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart *is* evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

Job 15:14

⁽¹⁴⁾ What *is* man, that he should be clean? and *he which is* born of a woman, that he should be righteous?

Psalms 51:5

⁽⁵⁾ Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Psalms 58:3

⁽³⁾ The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.

Note 3

Under God's Wrath

Unless a person is regenerated (i.e. born again of God's Holy Spirit), and justified (or declared righteous), that person remains under the just condemnation of God. The wrath of God abides on him, together with the curse of the law. This is the penalty for that person's sin, and for the fact that he remains an enemy of God. He remains God's enemy because of his sin, and because of his rejection of—or failure to acknowledge—the truth, and to seek God's mercy. So long, therefore, as he remains alienated from God, and dead in trespasses and sins, that person remains under God's righteous wrath and judgment.

Scripture References

John 3:18

⁽¹⁸⁾ 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 3:36

⁽³⁶⁾ 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.

Romans 1:18

⁽¹⁸⁾ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

Romans 2:5

⁽⁵⁾ But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

Note 4

No Forgiveness without Atonement

God will not forgive sin on the grounds of a person's (supposedly) good character or good works. God will forgive sin only on the grounds of the perfect character and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in virtue of his substitutionary and atoning sacrifice. Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin. Only a life lived in perfect obedience to God is acceptable to God. Christ lived that kind of life for all who would believe on him. The Lord Jesus thereby satisfied God's demands on his people for a life of perfect obedience to him. Only a perfect, unblemished life is acceptable to God as an atoning sacrifice for sin. Christ had no sins of his own for which to atone. However, the holy Son of God voluntarily laid down his perfect, spotless life to make atonement for repentant and believing sinners.

Scripture References

Leviticus 17:11

⁽¹¹⁾ For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it *is* the blood *that* maketh an atonement for the soul.

Hebrews 9:22

⁽²²⁾ And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

Romans 3:25

⁽²⁵⁾ Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

1 Peter 1:18-19

⁽¹⁸⁾ Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; ⁽¹⁹⁾ But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

Part 2

Doctrine of Sin

Early Church Teaching

To determine how the early Church interpreted the two biblical doctrines of sin and salvation, we will consider the cardinal truths set forth by Augustine. We have set out the fundamental points below.

Augustinian Doctrine of Sin

1. We are each conscious of sin. We recognise ourselves as guilty and polluted. We are amenable to the justice of God, and we are offensive to God's holiness.
2. We are guilty and polluted, both because of our deliberate acts of transgression, and also because of sinful affections, feelings, and emotions. This sense of sin attaches not only to these positive and consciously active states of mind, but also to the mere absence of right affections. For example, hardness of heart; lack of love; lack of humility; lack of faith; or lack of any other Christian grace or virtue, is sin.
3. As far as consciousness extends, we recognise that we have always been sinners.
4. We are convinced that, of ourselves, we have no power to change our corrupt moral nature, or to make ourselves holy. Our liberty, or free will, gives us freedom in sinning, but it cannot give us the freedom to live righteously. We are slaves to sin, and to unrighteousness. The ability to live righteously—in a manner pleasing to God—comes only as a gift of God's grace.
5. We are conscious that sin is not a necessary act. Sin has its origin in the free will of man, and must therefore be voluntary. Sin is voluntary in that: (a) It has its origin in an act of the will; (b) It has its source in man's will; (c) It consists in the determination of the will to do evil.
6. All men show themselves to be sinners. Everyone gives evidence of sinfulness, as soon as they give evidence of reason. They not only appear as transgressors of God's law; they also appear as spiritually dead: devoid of all evidence of spiritual life. They are the willing slaves of sin—entirely unable to deliver themselves from their bondage to corruption.¹

Augustinian Doctrine of Salvation

From the above, it follows that:

1. If men are to be saved, it cannot be by their own merit, but solely through the undeserved love of God.
2. Regeneration of the soul must be the exclusive, and supernatural, work of the Holy Spirit. The sinner can neither effect this work himself, nor co-operate in its production. In other words, grace is certainly efficacious or irresistible.

Salvation is of grace, or of the sovereign mercy of God:

In that God might justly have left men to perish in their apostasy, without any provision for their redemption.

¹ This section based on C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology* Vol. 2 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977 reprint], pp.159-160.

In that men—being destitute of the power of doing anything holy or meritorious—their justification cannot be by works, but must be a matter of God's favour.

In that salvation depends—not on the will of the persons saved—but on the good pleasure of God. Only those whom God has called will be made partakers of the redemption of Christ. In other words, election to eternal life is founded on the sovereign pleasure of God, and not on the foresight of good works.

1. The perseverance of the saints is assured. Since God of his own good pleasure elects some to eternal life, they cannot fail of salvation. Once saved, they cannot be lost.²

² This section based on C. Hodge, *op. cit.* Vol. 2, pp.160-161.

Part 3

Essential Points Regarding Sin

From the time when the Church first began to formalise in written form the Bible's teaching about sin, it has maintained the following essential points:

1. In his or her present state of existence, everyone is a sinner.
2. The universal sinfulness of humanity originated, and was caused by, Adam's voluntary desertion (or apostasy) from God. By his sin, Adam fell from the state of righteousness in which God had created him. (The Fall of man.)
3. Fallen human nature is corrupted by sin and is totally unable to produce the standard of righteousness that God requires. No one, therefore, can merit or work for their salvation. A person can receive salvation only through repentance and faith in Christ. Godly repentance for sin, and genuine saving faith in Christ, results from the Holy Spirit's work in a person's life.
4. Even infants, when they are born, need subsequently to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit and redeemed by Christ's atoning blood. They, like anyone else, find salvation only through Christ's meritorious and substitutionary work.³

Original Sin

Since the fall of man, every person born into the world by natural procreation (i.e. everyone except Christ), has inherited Adam's sinful nature. We may express the effects of Adam's sin on all humanity as follows:

1. The guilt of his first sin, which affects not only Adam, but also all his descendants.
2. The loss of original righteousness (the morally and spiritually upright state in which God originally created Adam and Eve). Adam and Eve transmitted this loss to all their descendants; i.e. to the entire human race.
3. The corruption of our whole nature—rational, moral and spiritual.

Usually, we refer to this corruption of our whole nature (rational, moral, and spiritual) as *original sin*—but not always. Sometimes, the term, *original sin*, is understood to mean all three effects listed above, and not just the last mentioned. We refer to this inward corruption, in which everyone since the Fall is born, as original sin for the following reasons:

1. Because, by its very nature, it is actually and properly *sin*.
2. Because it proceeded from our first parents as the *origin* of our race.
3. Because it is the *origin* of all other sins and sinful tendencies—in thought, word and deed.
4. Because, by its nature, *original sin* is distinguished from *actual sins*. Actual sins are sins that we ourselves commit.⁴

³ This section based on C. Hodge, *op. cit.* Vol. 2, pp.150-151.

Reformed Teaching of Original Sin

According to the churches of the Reformation, which based their beliefs and principles on the teachings of the Bible, original sin is stated to be a corruption of nature derived from Adam. Statements supporting this declaration are:

1. That this corruption of nature affects the whole soul.
2. That it consists in the loss or absence of original righteousness, and consequent entire moral depravity of our nature. This moral depravity includes, or manifests itself by, a dislike for, and turning away from, all spiritual good—or from God—and an inclination toward all evil.
3. That, by its very nature, it is actually and properly sin; and as such, it involves both guilt and pollution.
4. That it retains its character as sin, even in those whom the Holy Spirit has regenerated.
5. That it makes the soul spiritually dead, so that the natural or unrenewed person is entirely unable of himself to do anything good in the sight of God.⁵

A 'natural' or unrenewed person is anyone who does not have the Spirit of God indwelling him or her. Such a person has never experienced the Holy Spirit's regenerating and renewing power. This experience, however, is essential to salvation and eternal life.

In saying that a natural or unregenerate person is unable to do anything good in the sight of God, this does not mean that he is incapable of doing many good and commendable deeds. These deeds may win for him the approval and acclamation of the world. However, *in the sight of God*, they are totally worthless. A person who is alienated from God by sin, cannot commend himself to God by works of his own flawed righteousness. In God's sight, all our righteous acts are like filthy rags. Thus, the Scripture says:

Isaiah 64:6-7

⁽⁶⁾ But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. ⁽⁷⁾ And *there is* none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.

Original Sin in Regard to Infants

Every child is born with the guilt and pollution of original sin, and with an inherently sinful nature. Children born to believing parents—or to at least one believing parent—are sanctified by their parent's faith. However, it is still necessary, at a later stage, for each child to be born again (regenerated). This takes place through the operation of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and through their personal repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Concerning children born to believing parents, or to at least one believing parent, the Scripture says:

1 Corinthians 7:13-14

⁽¹³⁾ And the woman which hath a husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. ⁽¹⁴⁾ For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. (See vv.15-16)

⁴ This section based on C. Hodge, *op. cit.* Vol. 2, p.227.

⁵ This section based on C. Hodge, *op. cit.* Vol. 2, pp.230-231.

No Infant or Child Will be Lost

It is the belief of this writer that no infant or child will ever perish. Should any child die before being capable of repenting and believing on Christ, they will be taken immediately into the presence of the Lord. The work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, together with the atoning blood of Christ shed on their behalf, ensures the redemption of every one of these children. Their (original) sin is forgiven—even although they have not been able personally to exercise saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.⁶

The same applies to every infant who dies before, or immediately after, birth. The Spirit of God regenerates them and takes them to be with the Lord. Again, God does not recognise a 'foetal' stage of development. To him, it is a living, developing infant. If he or she dies before birth, God accepts that unborn infant into the glory, joy, and happiness of his presence.

Someone may object that God receives all his *elect* children, whereas we have declared that God receives all infants and younger children, apparently indiscriminately. However, we must bear in mind that *God knew from eternity that these particular children would not survive their tender years*. Therefore, in view of these exceptional circumstances, it would be most unwise to assert that God did not elect every single one of these infants and children. And if God has elected all such infants and children, they will dwell in his presence forever.

God's Concern for Infants and Children (Scripture References)

Concerning such infants, the Scripture says:

2 Samuel 12:22-23

- ⁽²²⁾ And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell *whether* GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?
⁽²³⁾ But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.

Moreover, concerning the special importance of children to the Lord Jesus, the Scripture says:

Matthew 18:1-4

- ⁽¹⁾ At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?
⁽²⁾ And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, ⁽³⁾ And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. ⁽⁴⁾ Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 18:5-6

- ⁽⁵⁾ And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.
⁽⁶⁾ But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Matthew 18:10-11

- ⁽¹⁰⁾ Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.
⁽¹¹⁾ For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

Let us remember that God appoints his angels to minister to those who are the heirs of salvation.

⁶ This section based on C. Hodge, *op. cit.* Vol. 2, pp.245-246.

Matthew 18:12-14

⁽¹²⁾ How think ye? if a man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? ⁽¹³⁾ And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that *sheep*, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. ⁽¹⁴⁾ Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

Original Sin in Regard to the Handicapped

Again, it is the belief of this author that the same principle applies to those who—because of some learning disability, or some mental abnormality, or other condition affecting the brain or mind—are unable to understand the Gospel and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Notwithstanding their inability to respond to the call of the gospel through faith, God's grace will ensure that his Holy Spirit will regenerate all his people. None of these, therefore, will ever perish.⁷

⁷ See *Bible Truths Explained: Predestination* by the same author

Part 4

Depravity of Mankind

All mankind is born with a corrupt sinful nature derived from Adam. The incarnate Son of God was the sole exception. The virgin Mary did not conceive Jesus by normal procreation, but by the power of the Holy Spirit. Adam's sinful nature was not transmitted to the Lord Jesus, nor was the guilt of original sin imputed or conveyed to him.

Apart from the Son of God, everyone without exception possesses this corrupt sinful nature. This applies to people from every stratum of society. It includes those who have been afforded the greatest privileges and the highest education. Equally, it includes those who have had to endure the severest deprivation, and who have had little meaningful education. Neither privileged position, nor the best education in the world, can ever make a person acceptable to God. Nor can the lack of these benefits in any way hinder a person from being brought into right relationship with God by the Holy Spirit's regenerating power, and through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The corrupt sinful nature applies not only to all classes of men and women, but also to all nationalities and to all cultures of men and women. Regardless of colour, creed, or any other distinguishing features, all men and women alike are sinners. If their heart is not right with God, the most outwardly religious people have absolutely no advantage over the most unrighteous and irreligious people. Both groups alike stand condemned.

This total depravity of mankind manifests itself to a greater or lesser extent by what people think, say, and do. All humanity has wilfully rebelled against God and every expression of men and women's sinful nature is a further evidence of his or her defiance and revolt.

Man's Heart is Wholly Corrupted by Sin (Scripture References)

When we say that all mankind is totally depraved, we do not mean that everyone is equally wicked, or as bad as they can be. There are varying degrees of sin—in thought, word, and deed. However, everyone's heart is wholly corrupted and polluted by sin. It is from the heart that all evil thoughts, words and deeds proceed.⁸ As the Scripture says:

Jeremiah 17:9

⁽⁹⁾ The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it? (See v.10)

Mark 7:20-23

⁽²⁰⁾ And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.
⁽²¹⁾ For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, ⁽²²⁾ Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: ⁽²³⁾ All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

⁸ This section based on C. Hodge, *op. cit.* Vol. 2, pp.233-234.

Continually Evil from Childhood (Scripture References)

Concerning the total depravity of all mankind, the Scripture says:

Genesis 6:5

- ⁽⁵⁾ And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually. (See vv.1-8)

Genesis 6:11-13

- ⁽¹¹⁾ The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.
- ⁽¹²⁾ And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. ⁽¹³⁾ And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. (See Gen. 7:21-22)

Genesis 8:21a

- ^(21a) And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart *is* evil from his youth [or *childhood*]... (See v.20)

Psalms 14:1-3

- ⁽¹⁾ To the chief Musician, *A Psalm of David*.
The fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, *there is* none that doeth good.
- ⁽²⁾ The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *and* seek God. ⁽³⁾ They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy: *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one. (Cf. Rom. 3:10-18)

Psalms 51:5

- ⁽⁵⁾ Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

No-one is Righteous (Scripture References)

Ecclesiastes 7:20

- ⁽²⁰⁾ For *there is* not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not. (See v.29)

Isaiah 64:6

- ⁽⁶⁾ But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. (See v.7)

Romans 3:9-18

- ⁽⁹⁾ What then? are we better *than they*? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;
- ⁽¹⁰⁾ As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:
- ⁽¹¹⁾ There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

- (12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. *{Psalms 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Eccles. 7:20}*
- (13) Their throat *is* an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps *is* under their lips: *{Psalm 5:9; Psalm 140:3}*
- (14) Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness: *{Psalm 10:7}*
- (15) Their feet *are* swift to shed blood:
- (16) Destruction and misery *are* in their ways:
- (17) And the way of peace have they not known: *{Isaiah 59:7,8}*
- (18) There is no fear of God before their eyes. *{Psalm 36:1}*

Romans 3:19-20

- (19) Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. ⁽²⁰⁾ Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

Good Deeds Cannot Atone for Sin

Outside of Christ, and because of his sin, all humanity is abiding under God's wrath and condemnation. If people are to be reconciled to God, God's righteous wrath must be appeased by means of an atonement for sin. No amount of good deeds can ever make atonement for the sinful soul, nor can good works assist in the work of redemption. God reconciles to himself only those whom he redeems by the shed blood of the Lamb.

Those only will enter God's kingdom whose sins have been forgiven by Christ's substitutionary and atoning sacrifice. Those only will become the children of God who experience the Holy Spirit's power in regeneration. Such people, however, do not trust in their own good deeds or 'righteous acts'. Rather, they trust wholeheartedly in the perfect righteousness of Christ, and in his finished work on their behalf.

Part 5

Magnitude and Criminality of Sin

In the sight of God, all sins—from the least to the greatest—merit the same penalty. That penalty is death—spiritual, physical, and eternal death. Although not equally serious, or equally blameworthy, all sins without exception deserve everlasting punishment. Thus, God’s Word says:

Romans 6:23

⁽²³⁾ For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Cf. Gen. 2:17)

Galatians 6:7-8

⁽⁷⁾ Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. ⁽⁸⁾ For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

James 1:15

⁽¹⁵⁾ Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. (See vv.13-14)

The Bible constantly asserts that sin—all sin—is not only detestable to God, but is also the object of his holy wrath and righteous indignation. Any kind or degree of sin is the just ground for the sentence of eternal punishment. Thus, the Scripture says:

Ezekiel 18:4

⁽⁴⁾ Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

Ezekiel 18:20

⁽²⁰⁾ The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. (See vv.5-19, 21-32; cf. Ezek. 33:11-20)

Ephesians 2:1-3

⁽¹⁾ And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins
⁽²⁾ Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: ⁽³⁾ Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (See vv.4-9)

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

⁽⁶⁾ Seeing *it is* a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; ⁽⁷⁾ And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, ⁽⁸⁾ In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: ⁽⁹⁾ Who shall be punished

with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; ⁽¹⁰⁾ When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

If, in a whole lifetime, a person were to commit only one sin, Christ would still have had to suffer and die for that sin. Again, if, in a whole lifetime, a person did not commit any sin, Christ would still have had to endure the cross for that person's *original* sin, and for their *sinful nature*. Herein lies the magnitude and criminality of even the most minor offences: our sin—original sin, sinful attitudes, sinful inclinations, and actual sins—resulted in the sufferings and death of God's one and only Son.

Concerning the fact that even one sin would have made necessary Christ's atoning death, the Scripture says:

Galatians 3:10

⁽¹⁰⁾ For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. {*Deut. 27:26*}

James 2:10

⁽¹⁰⁾ For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all.

God's Wrath Against Sin

Our sin resulted in God's righteous wrath being unleashed upon his only beloved Son. Christ endured the wrath of God in his own body on the tree. The sinless Saviour took our place. He suffered and died as our substitute so that we might be spared God's sustained and terrible anger being inflicted upon us in a lost and dreadful hell. To this end, the Scripture says:

Isaiah 53:4-6

⁽⁴⁾ Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁽⁵⁾ But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. ⁽⁶⁾ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. (See vv.7-9)

Isaiah 53:10-11

⁽¹⁰⁾ Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. ⁽¹¹⁾ He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

Isaiah 53:12

⁽¹²⁾ Therefore will I divide him *a portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Romans 4:25

⁽²⁵⁾ Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

1 Peter 2:24

⁽²⁴⁾ Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

Never, then, can we account any sin as trivial, when we consider what that sin has done to a holy and innocent Victim. We stand on exactly the same ground as the most serious offender. By God's grace alone, have we been spared and forgiven. If, then, God can forgive *us* for causing the death of his only beloved Son, no one is beyond his saving grace and power. As the Scripture says:

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁽⁸⁾ For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: ⁽⁹⁾ Not of works, lest any man should boast.

1 Timothy 1:9

⁽⁹⁾ Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, (See v.10)

Part 6

God Detests Sin

God, who is absolutely holy, is in no respect the author or approver of sin. In God's sight, all sin is reprehensible and worthy of the most severe punishment. Sin is not due merely to human inadequacies or shortcomings. It is a moral evil, resulting from, or involving, deliberate choices. For this reason, God justly condemns the person who chooses to commit sin. Sin, therefore, is not an affliction or failing for which an individual is to be either pitied or excused.

The following Scriptures exemplify that sin is detestable to God:

Habakkuk 1:13

⁽¹³⁾ *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he? (See vv.12-17)*

Deuteronomy 25:14-16

⁽¹⁴⁾ Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small.
⁽¹⁵⁾ *But* thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. ⁽¹⁶⁾ For all that do such things, *and* all that do unrighteously, *are* an abomination unto the LORD thy God.

Psalms 10:3

⁽³⁾ For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, *whom* the LORD abhorreth.

Luke 16:13-15

⁽¹³⁾ No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

⁽¹⁴⁾ And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him. ⁽¹⁵⁾ And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

Man's Free Will

At the creation, God gave man free will. It was, therefore, easy for man to choose the good and right, and to obey God—especially since, as yet, he had no experience of choosing evil.

At the Fall, however, man's free will was corrupted so that the inclination of his mind and will became permanently biased toward evil. From this point on, and because of fallen man's sinful inclinations, it became much easier for him to choose evil than to choose good. Indeed, because of the corruption of his moral nature, mankind often found it more desirable to choose evil.

So, although God gave mankind a free will, mankind now abuses or misuses his free will. Instead of choosing to honour their Creator and God, men and women now exercise their free will in the deliberate choice of sinful and godless living. However, although they may defiantly reject God—or carelessly

neglect him—mankind is still responsible to God. God will hold every man and woman fully accountable for every sin they have committed—whether in thought, speech, or act.

Concerning the fact that fallen mankind's free will is biased continually toward evil, the Bible says:

Ecclesiastes 7:29

⁽²⁹⁾ Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions. (Cf. Rom. 1:30)

In his Word, God has given us his moral law, summarised in the Ten Commandments. (Exodus 20:1ff) He who is the Lawgiver will one day be the Judge. He will judge every secret thought, and every evil deed; and no one will escape the searching judgment of the Lord.

Responsible and Accountable to God

God Will Judge Every Thought, Word and Deed

Concerning the searching nature of God's judgment, the Scripture says:

Ecclesiastes 12:14

⁽¹⁴⁾ For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil.

Matthew 12:36-37

⁽³⁶⁾ But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. ⁽³⁷⁾ For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. (See vv.31-35)

Romans 2:16

⁽¹⁶⁾ In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel. (See vv.1-12)

Clearly, then, man cannot say that he is not responsible for his actions in the sight of God, or that God cannot call him to account for these actions. Nor can he claim that God cannot judge him since he is a fallen sinful creature by nature. When man sins, he chooses to sin. Every evil thought, word, and deed are conscious and deliberate exercises of his own corrupted free will. Mankind, therefore, remains fully responsible to God for his every thought, word, and action; and God will judge him according to his deeds.

Part 7

What Does God's Moral Law Demand?

Total and Willing Surrender to God's Will

God's moral law demands absolute and unwavering perfection of both our inward character and our outward or day-to-day conduct. It requires the entire conformity of our moral nature and behaviour, with the nature and will of God. This implies the unreserved consecration of all our abilities, talents and other faculties and endowments to God and to his service. It also implies an absolute submission of our mind and will to the mind and will of God, and to his purposes for us.

In pursuit of this entire dedication, God commands us to love him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and to love our neighbour as ourselves. Thus, to the scribe who asked Jesus which was the first commandment of all, the Lord replied:

Mark 12:29-31

⁽²⁹⁾ And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: ⁽³⁰⁾ And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: *{Deut. 6:4,5}* this *is* the first commandment. ⁽³¹⁾ And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. *{Lev. 19:18}* There is none other commandment greater than these.

This is the essence of the moral law. This is the standard that God demands. Any falling short of this standard is a falling short of the glory of God—or of God's glorious ideal. Falling short of God's standard of absolute perfection is sin.⁹ To this end, the Scripture says:

Romans 3:22b-23

^(22b) ...for there is no difference: ⁽²³⁾ For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

James 2:8-10

⁽⁸⁾ If ye fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, *{Lev. 19:18}* ye do well: ⁽⁹⁾ But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. ⁽¹⁰⁾ For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all. (See vv.1-13)

No Perfection in this Life

Thus, we can see that, in this life, perfection is unattainable. The moral law is so far-reaching that it declares all defects in any duty to be sin. For instance, all falling short of God's standards in purity of life, or in enthusiasm for the things of God, is a falling short of God's moral law. So, too, is all falling short of faithfulness of devotion and of holy affections. Similarly, all failing to do right, or failing to do the good we ought to do, is a falling short of the absolute perfection God demands. As such, it is sin.¹⁰

⁹ This paragraph based on C. Hodge, *op. cit.* Vol. 2, p.184.

¹⁰ This paragraph based on C. Hodge, *op. cit.* Vol. 2, p.185.

Thus, the Scripture says:

Luke 12:47

⁽⁴⁷⁾ And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*. (See vv.35-48)

James 4:17

⁽¹⁷⁾ Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin.

Although we have experienced the saving grace of God in redemption, we still fall very far short of the standard of God's moral law. Clearly, therefore, we will not experience perfection of character or of conduct in this life. While we remain in this life, we stand in the presence of God clothed with the perfect righteousness or perfection of Christ our Redeemer—not with any righteousness or perfection of our own.¹¹

Thus, God's Word says:

Philippians 3:9

⁽⁹⁾ And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: (See vv.4-11)

Philippians 3:12

⁽¹²⁾ Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. (See vv.13-15)

¹¹ See *Bible Truths Explained: Justification; Sanctification* by the same author.

Part 8

Sin Directed Against God

As stated on page 1, under the *Synopsis*, sin includes all forms of unintentional and deliberate wrongdoing. It also includes the failure to do right. Various forms of sin or sinful behaviour include failure, mistakes or error, as well as transgressions, trespasses, wickedness or unrighteousness. Directly or indirectly, sin is an expression of man's rebellion against God. Wittingly or unwittingly, consciously or subconsciously, therefore, when we sin, we sin against God.

Sin involves both guilt and pollution of the soul. It is a breaking of God's holy and righteous moral law, or any of its principles. Thus, God's Word says:

Romans 7:7-8

⁽⁷⁾ What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. {*Exodus 20:17; Deut. 5:21*} ⁽⁸⁾ But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin *was* dead. (See vv.9-11)

Romans 7:12-13

⁽¹²⁾ Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.
⁽¹³⁾ Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. (See vv.14-25)

1 John 3:4

⁽⁴⁾ Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

1 John 5:17

⁽¹⁷⁾ All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

Sin Leads to Idolatry

Dethroning God for an Idol

Sin also involves dethroning God in our lives, and putting an idol in his place. Often, that idol is self. Pleasing self becomes more important than pleasing God. Instead of living our lives to God's honour and glory, we live chiefly to fulfil selfish ambitions, or to gratify our sinful cravings and desires. Concerning these things, the Scripture says:

Ephesians 2:3

⁽³⁾ Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (See vv.1-5)

1 Timothy 6:6-12

- ⁽⁶⁾ But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁽⁷⁾ For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. ⁽⁸⁾ And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. ⁽⁹⁾ But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. ⁽¹⁰⁾ For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.
- ⁽¹¹⁾ But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. ⁽¹²⁾ Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. (See vv.3-5)

James 4:1-4

- ⁽¹⁾ From whence *come* wars and fightings among you? *come they* not hence, *even* of your lusts that war in your members? ⁽²⁾ Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. ⁽³⁾ Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts.
- ⁽⁴⁾ Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. (See vv.5-17; cf. v.4 with 1 John 2:15-17)

We Ought to Live for God's Glory (Scripture References)

Instead of living to please self, however, we should be living to please God—living to the praise of his glory—and to please others. As the Scripture says:

Romans 15:1-4

- ⁽¹⁾ We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. ⁽²⁾ Let every one of us please *his* neighbour for *his* good to edification. ⁽³⁾ For even Christ pleased not himself: but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. {*Psalm 69:9*} ⁽⁴⁾ For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. (See vv.5-7)

1 Corinthians 10:23-24

- ⁽²³⁾ All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. ⁽²⁴⁾ Let no man seek his own, but every man another's *wealth*. (See vv.14-33)

2 Corinthians 5:15

- ⁽¹⁵⁾ And *that* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

Philippians 2:3-4

- ⁽³⁾ *Let* nothing *be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. ⁽⁴⁾ Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. (See vv.5-13)

2 Timothy 3:1-5

- ⁽¹⁾ This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. ⁽²⁾ For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ⁽³⁾ Without natural affec-

tion, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, ⁽⁴⁾ Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; ⁽⁵⁾ Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. (See vv.6-9)

Idolising Another Person

Sometimes, our idol is another person. If we think more of another person than we do of the Lord our God, then that person is the true object of our devotion. He or she has become our false god.

These aspects of sin involve both selfishness and idolatry. Thus, concerning idolatry, God's Word says:

Ezekiel 14:1-6

- ⁽¹⁾ Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me.
⁽²⁾ And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, ⁽³⁾ Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them?
⁽⁴⁾ Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols; ⁽⁵⁾ That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols.
⁽⁶⁾ Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn *yourselves* from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations.

To this end also, the Lord Jesus said:

Matthew 6:19-21

- ⁽¹⁹⁾ Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: ⁽²⁰⁾ But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: ⁽²¹⁾ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Matthew 6:24

- ⁽²⁴⁾ No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Matthew 6:25

- ⁽²⁵⁾ Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? (See vv.26-30)

Matthew 6:31-34

- ⁽³¹⁾ Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? ⁽³²⁾ (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. ⁽³³⁾ But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. ⁽³⁴⁾ Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day *is* the evil thereof.

Part 9

The Greatest Sin

Unbelief

In view of the fact that our sin caused the suffering and death of God's one and only Son, the greatest of all sins is to neglect or reject the holy Son of God. This is the sin of wilful unbelief. To disregard God's Son in this way is to disregard God and to incur everlasting punishment. In his great love and mercy, however, God has provided a way of escape from this just and eternal punishment. To this end, he has commanded all men everywhere to repent. As the Scripture says:

Acts 17:30-31

⁽³⁰⁾ And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: ⁽³¹⁾ Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead. (See vv.22-29)

Everyone who heeds God's command will find everlasting mercy and forgiveness. Anyone who refuses to seek God's mercy will perish. He or she has spurned the one and only way of salvation through faith in God's Son; and, by their rejection, they have treated with contempt the substitutionary and atoning sacrifice of Christ. To neglect or reject the Son of God after being the cause of his death, however, is the greatest of all sins. God will not hold those guiltless who treat as nothing the death of his only Son. This is why the wrath of God against unbelieving and impenitent sinners is so severe and enduring.

Unbelief Merits Condemnation (Scripture References)

Concerning the sin of unbelief, the Scripture says:

Matthew 10:14-15

⁽¹⁴⁾ And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. ⁽¹⁵⁾ Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city. (See vv.5-13)

Matthew 17:17-18

⁽¹⁷⁾ Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. ⁽¹⁸⁾ And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. (See vv.14-21)

Hebrews 11:6

⁽⁶⁾ But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (See vv.1-40)

Believers Saved, Unbelievers Condemned (Scripture References)

Mark 16:15-16

⁽¹⁵⁾ And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. ⁽¹⁶⁾ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. (See vv.17-20)

Luke 10:16

⁽¹⁶⁾ He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me. (See vv.1-15)

John 3:18

⁽¹⁸⁾ 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. (See vv.14-21)

John 3:36

⁽³⁶⁾ 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. (See vv.31-35)

1 John 5:9-12

⁽⁹⁾ If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. ⁽¹⁰⁾ 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. ⁽¹¹⁾ And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ⁽¹²⁾ He that hath the Son hath life: *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. (See v.13)

Revelation 21:6-8

⁽⁶⁾ And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. ⁽⁷⁾ He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. ⁽⁸⁾ But the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. (See vv.1-5)

Unbelief Produces Hardness of Heart (Scripture References)

Matthew 13:13-15

⁽¹³⁾ Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

⁽¹⁴⁾ And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: ⁽¹⁵⁾ For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. {*Isaiah 6:9-10*} (See Matt. 13:10-17)

John 12:37-38

⁽³⁷⁾ But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: ⁽³⁸⁾ That the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? {*Isaiah 53:1*}

John 12:39-41

- ⁽³⁹⁾ Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again,
- ⁽⁴⁰⁾ He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with *their* eyes, nor understand with *their* heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. {*Isaiah 6:8-10*}
- ⁽⁴¹⁾ These things said Isaiah, when he saw his glory, and spake of him. (Cf. v.40 with Acts 28:24-28; Rom. 11:8)

Unbelievers Judged by God (Scripture References)

John 12:47-48

- ⁽⁴⁷⁾ And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. ⁽⁴⁸⁾ He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. (See vv.44-50)

Romans 1:18

- ⁽¹⁸⁾ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; (See vv.16-22)

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

- ⁽⁶⁾ Seeing *it is* a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; ⁽⁷⁾ And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, ⁽⁸⁾ In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:
- ⁽⁹⁾ Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; ⁽¹⁰⁾ When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

Hebrews 2:2-4

- ⁽²⁾ For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; ⁽³⁾ How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*;
- ⁽⁴⁾ God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

Part 10

The Unforgivable Sin

There is one sin that God will never forgive—either in this age, or in the age to come. This sin is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit—and it is known as the unforgivable or unpardonable sin.

What, however, does it mean to blaspheme the Holy Spirit? To ‘blaspheme’ means to speak evil of someone, or to slander his or her name, character, or reputation. It is usually applied to speaking evil of God, or slandering God’s holy name. This may take the form of speaking vilely of God’s most holy name, or of deliberately attempting to bring that name, character, or reputation into disrepute. Alternatively, it may take the form of wickedly and profanely associating God’s most holy name with any evil creature, evil thought, or evil act. To take an example from Scripture: the Pharisees spoke evil of the Lord Jesus—the Son of God—by attributing his works to the power of Satan. Thus, it is written:

Matthew 12:24

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

This was wilful and malicious slander or blasphemy. These Pharisees knew very well that Jesus was working in the name of God, his Father. The authority Jesus exercised over mankind and demons was the authority that God had given him. The power of the Lord Jesus was nothing less than the omnipotence of Almighty God—operating through his Holy Spirit. However, the Jewish religious leaders would never admit to the truth of these things.

The Unforgivable Sin (Scripture References)

Concerning the unforgivable sin, the Scripture says:

Matthew 12:22-23

⁽²²⁾ Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. ⁽²³⁾ And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?

The people were beginning to ask if Jesus could indeed be the son of David; i.e., the promised Messiah of David’s line. This, however, alarmed the Pharisees. Consequently, they attempted to discredit the miraculous power and authority that identified Jesus as God’s Son and as the promised Messiah of David’s line. To this end, it is recorded of the Pharisees:

Matthew 12:24

⁽²⁴⁾ But when the Pharisees heard *it*, they said, This *fellow* doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. (Cf. Mark 3:20-22; Luke 11:14-16)

Here, the Pharisees are attributing to Satan the work of God’s Holy Spirit. This comes perilously close to blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, because the Pharisees knew very well that Jesus was acting in the name of God and by the power of God’s Holy Spirit. However, they would not openly admit it, attempting rather to convince the people that Jesus was working by Satan’s power and authority. Greater blasphemy than this can scarcely be imagined. Yet, the Lord Jesus promised forgiveness of all blasphemy against himself as the Son of Man, but not against the Holy Spirit. (Matt. 12:31; Mark 3:28, quoted below)

The Scripture continues by saying of the Pharisees:

Matthew 12:25-28

⁽²⁵⁾ And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: ⁽²⁶⁾ And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? ⁽²⁷⁾ And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast *them* out? therefore they shall be your judges. ⁽²⁸⁾ But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. (Cf. Mark 3:23-26; Luke 11:17-20)

Matthew 12:29-30

⁽²⁹⁾ Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man and then he will spoil his house.

⁽³⁰⁾ He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. (Cf. Mark 3:27; Luke 11:21-23)

Blasphemy against The Holy Spirit (Scripture References)

The Lord Jesus issued this solemn warning to the Pharisees and other religious leaders:

Matthew 12:31-33

⁽³¹⁾ 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. ⁽³²⁾ 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.

⁽³³⁾ Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by *his* fruit. (See vv.34-37)

Mark 3:28-30

⁽²⁸⁾ Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: ⁽²⁹⁾ But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:

⁽³⁰⁾ Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

Luke 12:10

⁽¹⁰⁾ And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.

All Other Kinds of Blasphemy can be Forgiven

Mark 3:28-29 and Luke 12:10 (quoted above) makes it abundantly plain that God, in his mercy, is willing to forgive all kinds of blasphemy against himself or his Son. The apostle Paul is a case in point. To this end, the apostle testifies:

1 Timothy 1:12-13

⁽¹²⁾ And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, ⁽¹³⁾ Who was before a

blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. (See vv.14-16)

The Pharisees, however, were not merely speaking evil of God or of his Son. Certainly, this was a grievous sin, but it was not the unforgivable sin. Rather, the Pharisees were blaspheming God's Holy Spirit. They were attributing Jesus' power to expel demons—not to the Holy Spirit—but to Satan. In other words, they were saying that God's Son was using satanic power. To attribute the power of the Holy Spirit to Satan is to blaspheme God's Holy Spirit.

Again, the Pharisees were wilfully blaspheming or speaking evil of God's Holy Spirit *in the light of better knowledge*. Hence, because they knew better, and because they deliberately and maliciously attributed the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan, Jesus warned the Pharisees most severely about committing the unforgivable sin.

Who Can Commit the Unforgivable Sin?

Someone may ask, 'Who can commit the unforgivable sin?' Only those, who—like the Pharisees—possess a clear knowledge of God and of spiritual matters, and yet who wilfully and wickedly attribute the working of God, or of God's Holy Spirit, to Satan.

We should note that—although the Pharisees possessed a knowledge of God—*this knowledge was only of an intellectual nature*. For all their learning, many of these religious leaders did not possess the kind of knowledge that led to repentance toward God and genuine saving faith in God's one and only Son. On the contrary, the vast majority of the Pharisees and other religious leaders showed themselves openly hostile to everything that the Lord Jesus said and did. It was to this kind of people that the Lord addressed these solemn words of warning about the unforgivable sin. These people pretended to be very religious, and they wanted other people to believe that they were indeed pious believers in God. However, their words and their actions proved them to be hypocrites. They were intent in not only slandering God's name, but also in killing God's Son.

As the Scripture says:

Mark 3:6

⁽⁶⁾ And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him. (See vv.1-5)

Many people become worried in case they should have been guilty of committing the unforgivable sin. Such people can be reassured. Those people who commit the unforgivable sin, do not show concern or anxiety. Like most of the Pharisees, their knowledge of God is merely an intellectual or head knowledge. They are devoid of the Spirit and of spiritual insight or understanding. Furthermore, such people have hardened their evil hearts against the things of God. They have become totally insensitive to spiritual matters.

This is a very different situation to those who experience a genuine concern over the possibility of committing the unforgivable sin. By their concern, they show that they are still sensitive to spiritual issues, that they have not therefore hardened their hearts against the things of God, and consequently that—whatever other sins they may have committed—they cannot have committed the unforgivable sin.

We should note, of course, that when Jesus issued this solemn warning, he was addressing unregenerate individuals; viz., those Pharisees and other religious leaders who did not have the Spirit of God within them. The Lord was not addressing his disciples or anyone else who had believed on his name. It is not possible for any genuinely regenerate man or woman—in whom the Spirit of God dwells—to commit the unforgivable sin. Those Scriptures which may appear to suggest otherwise are referring not to genuinely regenerate men and women, but to those who profess to be regenerate individuals, but who are in fact false professors who have had no experience of the Holy Spirit's regenerating power in their lives. Such was Judas Iscariot. Such were the false teachers in the New Testament. Such too are those of whom Hebrews speaks when it warns against their trampling underfoot the blood of Christ.

None of these categories of people had ever been born again of God's Holy Spirit. However, many of them had professed to belong to Christ. Many of them had deceived others in the church by their false profession. Many of them had actually held offices within the church. Yet, none of these false professors ever knew what it was to be born of God's Holy Spirit. It is people such as these—very often to be found among the Lord's true people—that can commit the unforgivable sin, especially once they abandon their (false) profession or apostatise from the faith.

We will consider this in more detail in the section that follows.

Part 11

The Sin of Apostasy or Falling Away

No one whom the Holy Spirit has regenerated and whom God has justified can ever lose their salvation. Even so, it is possible for someone to claim allegiance to Christ, to follow his ways for a time, and yet to turn back to the ways of the world. This is because these people experienced only the *external* operations of the Holy Spirit. They did not experience, at any time, the *internal* and regenerating power of God's Holy Spirit.

In the case of such people, it is possible for them to fall away or apostatise from the faith; or, rather, from their (false) profession of faith. Judas Iscariot is a classic example of such a person. So, too, were the many 'disciples' who began to follow Jesus. Later, however, when his teaching became too difficult for them to accept, these same 'followers' abandoned the Lord and returned to the world. Such were never true disciples.

This principle of false professions of faith, false discipleship, and subsequent desertion (or apostasy) from the faith, is clearly expounded in the parable of the sower.¹² In expounding the parable of the sower, the Lord Jesus said:

Matthew 13:18-23

- ⁽¹⁸⁾ Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. ⁽¹⁹⁾ When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth *it* not, then cometh the wicked *one*, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.
- ⁽²⁰⁾ But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; ⁽²¹⁾ Yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. ⁽²²⁾ He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. ⁽²³⁾ But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth *it*; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some a hundredfold some sixty, some thirty. (See vv.3-8; cf. vv.24-30,37-43)

Backsliding is Not Apostasy

Those people who turn back permanently from following Christ, thereby prove that they were never truly regenerated believers. They were never truly the Lord's disciples. We should observe, however, that a person who is a true believer could backslide; i.e. he could turn aside temporarily from a godly, holy and pure way of life. While in a backslidden condition, that person might commit some very serious sins or greatly dishonour the Lord's name (as, for example, King David or the apostle Peter).

Unlike, an apostate who wilfully cuts himself off from God's mercy and from the means of grace, however, a backslidden believer is conscious of his sins and convicted of those sins by the Holy Spirit. Eventually, he recognises his folly and acknowledges his sin to God. When he returns to the Lord in

¹² See *Bible Truths Explained: Faith*, under *The Parable of The Sower*; and under *Falling Away From The Faith*, by the same author.

true godly repentance, God restores him to his fellowship, immediately and completely. Once more, by God's super-abounding and forgiving grace, that person finds peace in his heart with God.

Backsliding, therefore, is not the same as apostasy. Apostasy is an utter and final renunciation of the faith, with absolutely no further interest in God, the church or in spiritual matters. Usually, an apostate will not experience any real sense of guilt for his sin. Nor does he experience the convicting power of God's Holy Spirit—except insofar as the Holy Spirit convicts and condemns all mankind of their sin and ungodliness. Again, an apostate refuses to recognise his folly in turning away from God, or to see the need of acknowledging his sin to God. He has finally abandoned God; and, very often, he will turn totally against God and against the church.

The Sin of Apostasy (Scripture References)

The apostate was aware of the way of salvation, but he has renounced that way. He saw the light, but he did not accept the light. He knew the truth, but he refused to believe the truth. Thus, the writer to the Hebrews illustrates the outcome of such as abandon the light they had:

Hebrews 6:4-6

⁽⁴⁾ For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, ⁽⁵⁾ And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, ⁽⁶⁾ If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame.

Hebrews 6:7-8

⁽⁷⁾ For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh off upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: ⁽⁸⁾ But that which beareth thorns and briars *is* rejected, and *is* nigh unto cursing; whose end *is* to be burned.

Yet, a final word of assurance is given to the true people of God:

Hebrews 6:9-11

⁽⁹⁾ But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. ⁽¹⁰⁾ For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. ⁽¹¹⁾ And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: (See v.12)

True Believers Cannot Fall Away

Those who have been born from above by God's Holy Spirit, and in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, are sealed for eternity and sanctified by that Spirit. They cannot fall away or apostatise from the faith. Every truly born again believer is a member of God's elect: and the elect of God can never perish. To this end, the Scripture says:

John 10:27-30

⁽²⁷⁾ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: ⁽²⁸⁾ And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand. ⁽²⁹⁾ My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand. ⁽³⁰⁾ I and *my* Father are one. (See vv.1-18,26)

Again, God's Word gives us this certain assurance:

Romans 8:28-30

⁽²⁸⁾ And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. ⁽²⁹⁾ For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. ⁽³⁰⁾ Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Romans 8:31-34

⁽³¹⁾ What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us? ⁽³²⁾ He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? ⁽³³⁾ Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth. ⁽³⁴⁾ Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. (Cf. v.32 with Rom. 3:24-26; 4:25; 5:8-11)

Separation from Christ Impossible (Scripture References)

It is impossible for anyone or anything to separate God's people from the love he has for them in Christ Jesus. Thus, the Scripture says:

Romans 8:35-39

⁽³⁵⁾ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?
⁽³⁶⁾ As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. {*Psalm 44:22*}
⁽³⁷⁾ Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. ⁽³⁸⁾ For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, ⁽³⁹⁾ Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Chosen By The Father (Scripture References)

Those whom God has chosen from before the creation of the world, cannot lose their salvation. For the Holy Spirit has sealed them unto the day of redemption. To this end, the apostle Paul says:

Ephesians 1:3-7

⁽³⁾ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: ⁽⁴⁾ According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: ⁽⁵⁾ Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁽⁶⁾ To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. ⁽⁷⁾ In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; (See vv.8-10)

Ephesians 1:11-12

⁽¹¹⁾ In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of

his own will: ⁽¹²⁾ That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

Sealed By The Holy Spirit (Scripture References)

Ephesians 1:13-14

⁽¹³⁾ In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, ⁽¹⁴⁾ Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

To the same end, the apostle Peter says:

1 Peter 1:3-5

⁽³⁾ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁽⁴⁾ To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁽⁵⁾ Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (See vv.2-9)

False Professors Judged by God

These so-called 'believers', however, were not members of God's elect. Their apostasy is evidence of this. They have trodden underfoot the blood of Christ. Effectively, this means that they have despised the only way of redemption through faith in the sacrificial, substitutionary, and atoning work of Christ. Thus, the Scripture solemnly warns:

Hebrews 10:28-29

⁽²⁸⁾ He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: ⁽²⁹⁾ Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought 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 10:30-31

⁽³⁰⁾ For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. {*Deut. 32:35*} And again, The Lord shall judge his people. {*Deut. 32:36; Psalm 135:14*}

⁽³¹⁾ *It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (See vv.38,39)

In the first instance, the above passages may be understood as a very severe warning to the Lord's redeemed people in case they should ever become guilty of bringing the name of Christ into disrepute. Such an offence might be committed by a backslider who had sinned grievously against the Lord and who was coming perilously close to despising the Lord, the Holy Spirit and the means of grace. To prevent this from happening, the Lord warns most clearly that he will punish any such offenders, probably with death—as in the church at Corinth—in order to deal with their sin, to root out iniquity from his church, but at the same time to preserve the offender's soul for eternity. (Cf. 1 Cor. 11:26-32)

In the second instance, however, the principles contained in this passage could well be applied to false professors within God's church. Apart from the fact that they had never truly been included among the sanctified people of God (Heb. 10:28), every part of this warning would apply with full force to them. They had professed (falsely) to have been redeemed by Christ's blood, but in fact they had never experienced regeneration or sanctification. Although they knew what the Lord's atoning sacrifice signified and effected, they had trodden underfoot and despised the redeeming blood of Christ. From their experiences within the church as (false) professors of the faith, they knew that this blood sanctified God's

people or set them apart as holy to the Lord. Yet, in their hearts, they repudiated both the Redeemer and his sacrifice of atonement. Consequently, by spurning the Saviour, by making a false profession of faith, by deceiving God's people (the church) and by taking part outwardly in the means of grace, they were despising the Spirit of grace and treating God and his church with utter contempt. In their case, the vengeance of God would result in their eternal suffering in hell or the everlasting fire.

Not All in the Church Belong to Christ

These so-called 'believers' were *in* the church, but they were not *of* the church. They may have taken part regularly in the services of the church, but they did not do so with a regenerated heart. They may have served the Lord and taught the way of salvation to others. Yet, in the Day of Judgment, the Lord will say to them:

Luke 13:27

⁽²⁷⁾ ...I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. (See vv.23-30)

Not all who name the name of Christ, belong to Christ. Not all who do many mighty miracles in his name, have entered into the kingdom of God. On the contrary, many who profess the name of Christ are lost; and lost they will remain for all eternity. For them, there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but only a fearful prospect of judgment.

Concerning such people, the Scripture says:

Matthew 7:21-23

⁽²¹⁾ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. ⁽²²⁾ Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ⁽²³⁾ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (See vv.15-20)

2 Timothy 2:19

⁽¹⁹⁾ Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. {*Num. 16:5 (see Septuagint)*} And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

Hebrews 10:26-27

⁽²⁶⁾ For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, ⁽²⁷⁾ But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. (See vv.28-31)

For the vast majority of people, however, a way of escape and forgiveness remains. The atoning sacrifice of Christ is fully efficacious to cleanse from all sin, and to reconcile to God the greatest sinner, or the vilest offender, who—by his grace—truly repents and believes the gospel.

Part 12

The Sinner's Substitute

Except for the sovereign grace of God, none of us would be spared from the just penalty of God's law. The wages of sin is death, and that penalty must be executed. If it is not to be executed upon the offender, then the wrath of God against sin must be executed upon the offender's sinless substitute. God has provided such a Substitute. Christ is the Lamb of God, slain from before the creation of the world for the sins of his people. Thus, the Scripture says:

Revelation 5:9-10

- ⁽⁹⁾ And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; ⁽¹⁰⁾ And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. (See vv.1-14)

Revelation 13:8

- ⁽⁸⁾ And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (See vv.1-10)

Christ, Our Atoning Sacrifice (Scripture References)

Christ alone is the propitiation—the acceptable satisfaction—for our sins. Thus, God's Word says:

Romans 3:24-26

- ⁽²⁴⁾ Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: ⁽²⁵⁾ Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; ⁽²⁶⁾ To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. (See vv.19-23)

1 John 2:2

- ⁽²⁾ And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world. (See v.1)

The Lord Jesus is the only way by which a man or a woman can escape the just wrath of God upon sin, and against the unrepentant sinner. Concerning this, the Scripture says:

Romans 5:8-10

- ⁽⁸⁾ But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
- ⁽⁹⁾ Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. ⁽¹⁰⁾ For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. (See vv.6-11)

Christ Delivers Us From God's Wrath (Scripture References)

Romans 8:1

⁽¹⁾ *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 1:10

⁽¹⁰⁾ And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. (See vv.4-9)

1 Thessalonians 5:9-10

⁽⁹⁾ For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁽¹⁰⁾ Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. (See vv.1-11)

All Whom God Calls Will Come (Scripture References)

All who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved—and there are no exceptions. No one can come to Christ for forgiveness, unless the Father in heaven draws him. However, no one whom the Holy Spirit thus enables to come to Christ, will ever be turned away. As the Scripture says:

John 6:37

⁽³⁷⁾ All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. (See vv.22-40)

John 6:44-45

⁽⁴⁴⁾ 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. ⁽⁴⁵⁾ It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. *{Isaiah 54:13; Jer. 31:34}* Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. (See vv.41-51)

John 6:63-66

⁽⁶³⁾ It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life. ⁽⁶⁴⁾ But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. ⁽⁶⁵⁾ And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

⁽⁶⁶⁾ From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. (See vv.67-71)

Everyone Who Calls, Will be Saved (Scripture References)

Romans 10:4-10

⁽⁴⁾ For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

⁽⁵⁾ For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. *{Lev. 18:5}* ⁽⁶⁾ But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? *{Deut. 30:12}* (that is, to bring Christ down *from above*;) ⁽⁷⁾ Or, Who shall descend into the deep? *{Deut. 30:13}* (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) ⁽⁸⁾ But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: *{Deut. 30:14}* that is, the word of faith, which we preach; ⁽⁹⁾ 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. ⁽¹⁰⁾ For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (See vv. 1-3)

Romans 10:11-13

⁽¹¹⁾ For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. {*Isaiah 28:16; Rom. 9:33*} ⁽¹²⁾ For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. ⁽¹³⁾ For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. {*Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21*} (See Rom. 10:14-17)