

Sermons on Sin



"WHERE DID THE DEVIL COME FROM?"

"WHAT IS SIN?"

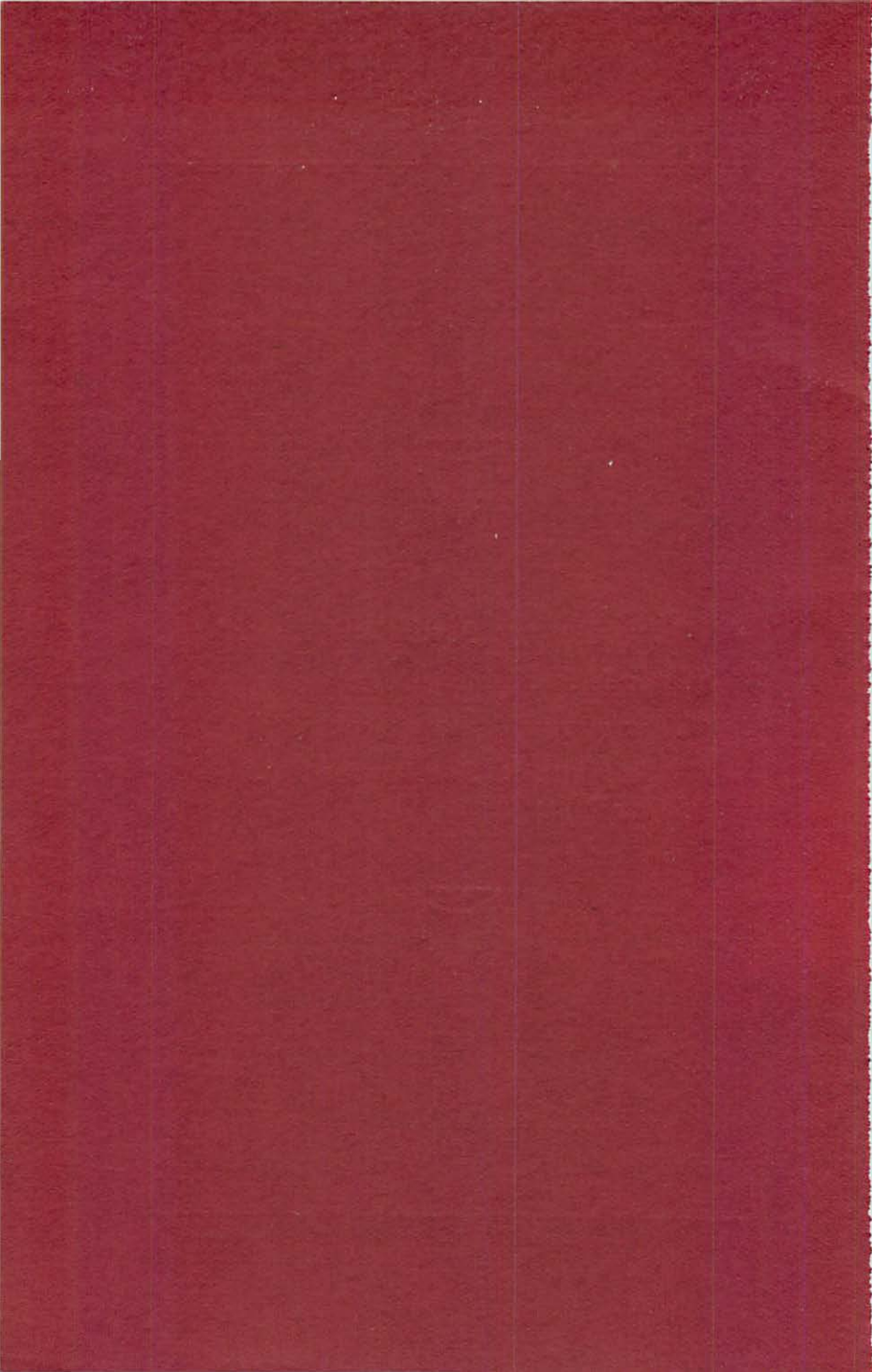
"WHAT IS THE UNPARDONABLE SIN?"

"WHAT IS THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY
SPIRIT?"



By

Guy N. Woods



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Foreword

Our two former books of sermons, "Why Churches of Christ Do Not Use Instrumental Music," and "Where Are the Dead?" have had such a cordial reception that we are encouraged to offer another book of sermons to our readers. Thousands of copies of the book on Instrumental Music have been distributed (one church in Fort Worth alone distributed 5,000 copies of this sermon) and the book, "Where Are the Dead?" has had, and continues to have a fine sale. The present volume, "Sermons On Sin," contains a series of sermons we have preached in meetings throughout the land on "Where Did the Devil Come From?" "What Is Sin?" "What is the Unpardonable Sin?" and "What is the Sin Against the Holy Spirit?" Many requests have come for printed copies of these sermons and this book is in response to this demand. If it shall, in some way, shed light on the subjects discussed, and make easier the understanding thereof, we shall feel richly repaid for our efforts.

—GUY N. WOODS

SERMON NUMBER ONE

Where Did The Devil Come From?

Man is possessed of an insatiable curiosity. He is evermore delving into those things that are untaught or at best set forth but obscurely in the Scriptures. And, not infrequently is this done to the utter neglect of matters plainly revealed—matters of far more importance than that which engages his attention. However, it has ever been thus: Moses warned of the dangers of such a course; Paul inveighed against one who, while “intruding into those things which he hath not seen,” is “vainly puffed up in his fleshly mind,” and there are those among us today who are so industrious in the propagation of untaught questions that churches are disrupted and divisions occur in the body of Christ. Man, it seems, has a penchant for the novel and the strange; and if an air of mystery attaches, his interest is increased thereby.

There are certain questions every gospel preacher is frequently called upon to answer. Where did Cain get his wife? What became of the tower of Babel? Where did the Negro come from? What is the sin against the Holy Ghost? Where did the devil come from? and a host of others are asked again and again. Some of these possess no practical importance; were the answers known the quer-

ist would be no better off than before. And yet, gospel preachers frequently contact those who are far more interested in these questions than they are in the resurrection of Christ, or his glorious ascension and regal coronation!

The last two questions, Where did the devil come from? and What is the sin against the Holy Ghost, do possess some practical importance, inasmuch as they are so intimately associated with the question of sin in general, and it is our purpose to present a collation of Scriptures touching these questions. The twin problems of sin and Satan have long challenged the attention of earth's wisest philosophers, and they yet possess an absorbing interest to most people today. And, as on any other Bible question, many matters must be passed over because all is not fully revealed, it is yet a fact that a surprising amount may be learned about them by a careful collation of the passages touching upon the question.

When we are led to think of sin in connection with its origin, the mind instinctively goes back to the Garden of Eden and to Eve and her seduction by the serpent. This, however, was not its beginning. Sin and Satan existed before that event! For it is a curious fact that sin had its origin, not on earth, but in heaven; not among men, but among the angels! On this point we are able to speak with some assurance; here the Scriptures speak plainly, clearly, decisively. When the seventy returned from their mission and reported that even the devils were subject unto them through Christ's name, our Savior declared, "I beheld Satan as

lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:18). Two things are apparent from this statement: (1) The Lord spoke in the past tense, "I beheld;" it follows therefore, that the event thus described occurred some time prior to the time of speaking; (2) It is said that Satan as lightning "fell from heaven." We conclude from this then that Satan was once in heaven, and subsequently fell.

This conclusion we think conclusively follows from this passage. We are not unaware of the fact that there are other interpretations; some attach a figurative significance to these words, and conclude that he meant only to speak of the successful efforts of those who had returned from their mission. It seems best, however, to follow the general rule of interpretation of permitting words to have their primary and literal import, unless there is something in the context or general teaching of the scriptures which renders such an interpretation absurd or impossible. So far as we are able to see there is nothing in the way of such a view of the passage, and it should, therefore, be permitted to stand. This was B. W. Johnson's view of the matter. In his "People's New Testament with Notes," Brother Johnson says, "Various interpretations of this statement are given, but it is probable that Christ refers to the original fall of Satan (Isa. 14: 12; Jude 6)."

Satan was, therefore, once in heaven; and from that high and holy place, fell. We are now ready for the next question, What was the occasion of this fall? Here, too, we may advance on safe ground; on this point also, the scriptures speak

with plainness. Paul, in listing the qualifications of an elder or bishop, said that he must not be a novice, "lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil" (I Tim. 3:6). This passage is susceptible of two explanations. It might be explained thus: An elder must not be a novice, lest being puffed up with pride, he be led to fall, and thus be condemned by the devil for falling! A moment's reflection however, is sufficient to convince one that this view of the passage is wholly incorrect. The devil condemns no one; much less one who is puffed up with pride. On the contrary, he would commend one in that attitude of mind. This view we therefore reject without hesitation. Only one other possible explanation remains: An elder must not be a novice, lest he fall like the devil fell, that is, by being puffed up with pride! This conclusion is, we believe, irresistible, and conclusive of the point in issue.

Satan therefore, fell, fell from heaven, fell from heaven because of pride. What was the cause of his pride? We are sorry that here we are unable to speak with the assurance that has thus far characterized our study. True, there is a passage that, in the opinion of many, sets forth the occasion therefor. We refer to Isa. 14:12. It will be noted that Johnson lists it among those passages which, in his opinion, pertain to the origin and fall of Satan. We introduce it with diffidence; the reader may draw his own conclusions. "How are thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which did weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I

will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds: I will be like the most High." It is certain that the passage refers primarily to the King of Babylon (see verse 4). Some think, however, that it has a secondary application to Satan himself, as typified by the King of Babylon. In this view, our Savior had this passage and the incident it records, in mind when he declared that he saw "Satan, as lightning, fall from heaven" (Luke 10:18). In this way Satan is identified with Lucifer, a created, and fallen angel.

Whether this is the correct view of the passage, the reader will decide for himself. If it is correct, it materially strengthens the position herein advanced; if it is incorrect, it does not weaken it. The scholarly Robert Milligan, one of the most profound writers and preachers of the early days of the Restoration era believed it to be correct, and referring to Lucifer, said, "In an evil hour his eye was turned from his Creator to himself as the highest, most gifted, and most influential of all the creatures of God. His heart swelled with pride; ambition took possession of his soul; and rebellion was then seen in heaven."

Summarizing, it has been shown that Satan, as Lucifer, was one of the angels. There came a time when vain ambition possessed him, and he attempted to assume the place of God himself. For his presumption he was cast out of heaven, and now reigns as Potentate of all evil spirits awaiting an

inevitable doom when he shall be cast "into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever." (Rev. 20:10). Reader: To whom are you rendering allegiance? Remember that there are but two kingdoms: the Kingdom of Christ, and the Kingdom of Satan. You are of necessity in one or the other. Those who stand in judgment unprepared will be consigned to a place of "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matt. 25:41). Hasten to escape this doom by submitting humbly to our Savior's mandates. Believe the gospel (Heb. 11:6), repent of your sins (Luke 13:3), confess your faith in Christ (Rom. 10:10), and be immersed for remission of sins (Acts 2:38). It is only those who thus do who have promise of ultimate deliverance from the wrath to come.

SERMON NUMBER TWO

What Is Sin?

By arguments which, to this writer at least, seem conclusive, it has been shown that sin began in heaven; that it had its origin in the rebellion of a created angel who, because he was puffed up with pride, sought to be the equal of God himself, and was, because of his vain ambition, cast out of the heavenly realm. Of the time when, and the place where such momentous events occurred, inspiration has not spoken; and it is idle for us to speculate thereon today. Suffice it to say it occurred prior to the creation of man; for shortly after that event, the Serpent, either the devil himself or his emissary, appeared in Paradise and seduced Eve, thereupon introducing sin into the human family.

We now propose to institute an inquiry into the nature of sin itself, with particular attention to the manner in which it affects the race. Of the importance of such a study the thoughtful person needs no proof. The marks of sin are as common as the air we breathe; we can, at best, but feebly apprehend its consequences in the human family. From the "first pair in paradise" until the present, none has ever escaped its contaminating influence in some way; and all of the sorrow and suffering in the world are to it directly traceable. By its evil

influence the mother of the race fell; because of it the Sinless Savior died a felon's death on a cruel cross; and it, alone, is responsible for the fact that the earth is a veritable charnal house of death.

The Scriptures do not affect to be a dictionary or book of definitions; and yet, there are some terms of such vital import therein, that definitions thereof are clearly set forth, for our edification. "Sin," is such a term. In I John 3:4, it is said that "sin is the transgression of the law." The word "transgression," means a falling away from God and therefore a violation of his commandments. To illustrate: Paul to the Ephesians said, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hand the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Eph. 4:28). Suppose therefore, that one deliberately steals after becoming a Christian? His act amounts to nothing less than a positive violation of this divine injunction, and is, therefore, sin. So, too, of all the other commandments. Hence, sin consists in being disobedient to the commandments of God. This conclusion irresistibly follows.

At one time in life, this writer labored under the impression, as many do today, that this is about the only way in which sin can be committed, i. e. by a positive disobedience and violation of God's commandments. A careful study of the New Testament will reveal, however, that there is a far more common and insidious method of sinning than by positive disobedience. John, in the epistle above alluded to, also said that "All unrighteousness is sin" (I John 5:17). It is at once apparent that this

definition differs from the foregoing one, in that this views sin from a negative standpoint, whereas that looks at it from a positive one. "Unrighteousness," therefore, is "sin." But "righteousness," consists in keeping God's commandments (Ps. 119: 172). It follows therefore, that sin results from failing to keep God's commandments.

We thus see that John presents "sin" from two viewpoints: (1) positively; (2) negatively. In the first instance, sin consists in doing that which is wrong; in the second, in failing to do that which is right! This distinction is clearly set forth also in the Old Testament in the various terms used to designate sin. It is folly therefore, to ignore it. We not infrequently pray, "Lord, forgive us of our sins, whether they be by omission, or by commission." What do we intend by this petition? Simply this: "Forgive us for having done things that we ought not to have done; and, in addition, forgive us for not having done those things we ought to have done!" This two-fold petition should be incorporated in every prayer for forgiveness offered. Unfortunately, there are those in nearly every congregation who utterly ignore this important fact, and who go through life assuming that they are acceptable before God simply because they abstain from wrong. They thus base their hope of future happiness on the things they do not do. They boast of the fact that they have not done this, and they do not do that, and with Pharisaical hypocrisy, thank God that they are not like other men! The things they have not done would fill a large book. Those of this class should try to total

up a column of zeros sometime! They, likely, would be surprised at the sum thus obtained. They go along through life, blissfully ignorant of the fact that it is as sinful to fail to do that which is right, as it is to be guilty of doing that which is actually wrong. This writer once approached a man who, he knew, was indifferent, unconcerned, and negligent of his duty, and had long failed to meet with the church on the first day of the week. It was suggested that he should make acknowledgement and henceforth be faithful in discharging his duties. The brother appeared greatly perturbed at the suggestion, and belligerently demanded that I point out something he had done. I could counter with the statement, "I'd like for you to tell me something you have done, too. Perhaps you have not been guilty of extreme deeds of wrong, but neither have you been doing that which is right. One constitutes sin the same as the other. No, I can't think of anything you have been doing either!"

It is not without significance that, in the parable of the Talents, the unprofitable servant is referred to by the Lord as being "wicked." The brother above alluded to, as well as all others in his class, would no doubt have been wonderfully insulted had I called him a wicked man, and yet, this precisely is what the Lord does of all that class who do nothing. Our concept of wickedness is more limited than that of the Lord, it would appear from this. It is a fact that, measured by the standard which obtains with many in the church today, the One Talent man was an admirable character. If one's fitness for eternal bliss consists sole-

ly in the things one does not do, one can make out a splendid defense of this man. Observe, (1) He was not a wastrel; (2) He was not a reckless plunger; (3) He did not embezzle his Lord's money; (4) He was not dishonest; (5) There is no evidence that he was a drunkard; (6) So far as we know he was not an adulterer; as a matter of fact, the list might be indefinitely extended. Yet, the Lord charged him with being wicked. It certainly was not because of what he had done that that charge was levelled against him. It must, therefore, have been because of what he had failed to do. Shall we expect the Lord to look with less severity on our negligence today?

In spite of these obvious facts, it is nevertheless true there are many in the church today who have no more assuring hope of eternal bliss than the fact that they abstain from gross indulgence in sin. On this basis alone do they expect at last to receive a home in the skies. It is as if a man comes home at the close of the day weary and tired, but with pleasant anticipation of a cheery welcome, a warm meal and a place of comfort. Instead, and to his surprise, he finds nothing done for his comfort, no meal prepared; on the contrary, his wife sits serenely, idly, with folded hands. He begins to upbraid her for neglect, and she answers him as follows: "I haven't broken a dish today. All of the silverware is intact; not a piece is missing. I have torn up none of the clothes, I have chopped up none of the furniture; I have, in fact done nothing I shouldn't have done, all day." In spite of the fact that, in this respect at least, her conduct was exemplary, would such an

explanation suffice? Is it not likely that he would vigorously insist that proper appreciation for the duties and responsibilities of the home would suggest that not only are things to be refrained from that are wrong; but that there are certain things also to be done that are right, as well. Goodness is not a negative quality; it is not something that exists only in the absence of wrong-doing. Mere harmlessness is not necessarily holiness! Yet, this, precisely, is the ground upon which many base their sole hope of future happiness.

Here, indeed, lies the most insidious threat to our future bliss. Most persons of maturity are able to exercise sufficient self-restraint to guard against the grosser sins, or those wicked deeds which indicate depravity of heart or mind. It is the acceptance of a false philosophy such as this which lulls one into a false sense of security that eventuates in one's ruin. Here, surely, is a danger that confronts us all.

SERMON NUMBER THREE

What Is The Unpardonable Sin?

(An Exposition of I John 5:16)

"If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it" (I John 5:16). An analysis of this interesting and important passage will reveal that a Christian or child of God (1) can sin; (2) can commit sin that is unto death. It follows further that there is (1) a sin that is not unto death; (2) a sin that is unto death; and finally, (1) one who sees a brother commit the sin not unto death may ask for him forgiveness and receive it; whereas, (2) those who sin unto death need expect no forgiveness, for in such cases it will not be forthcoming.

What is the "Unpardonable Sin" of I John 5:16? The commentaries are of little help in expounding this particular passage. For example, MacKnight assumes that the sin mentioned is some form of fatal malady peculiar to the apostolic age, an assumption, we think, utterly destitute of proof. Others similarly associate it in some way with the "sickness" mentioned in James 5. These "interpretations" are so utterly devoid of proof that it seems unnecessary to attempt a refutation thereof. It seems certain, if

any confidence at all may be placed in the passage that the "sin" mentioned, is simply sin in the ordinary import of the word, and we shall so consider it in this sermon.

Others, with more reason, identify the "unpardonable sin" of this passage, with the "Sin against the Holy Ghost," of Matt. 12: 31,32. This, however, we think to be clearly erroneous, proof of which will be offered hereunder. True, all sin is, of course, against the Holy Spirit; and the "Sin against the Holy Spirit," is, indeed, unpardonable. However, "The sin against the Holy Spirit," is, in our view, not "the unpardonable sin" of I John 5:16. In our opinion, these sins mentioned in the foregoing passages are specific sins, involving definite characters, and are not, therefore, to be identified with sin in general. What then, is the unpardonable sin?

Contrary to popular belief, it is not persistent rejection of the gospel unto, or until, death. Be it observed that John is here contemplating sin, not in relation to alien sinners, but as it affects those who are children of God. "If any man see his brother sin a sin," is the main thesis of the passage; the scope of the statement by John is not therefore a consideration of sin in general, nor of the alien sinner in particular; it relates simply and solely to those who are already children of God. We may therefore, and shall, eliminate from our consideration all except those who have obeyed the gospel.

Were there no other reasons, it would seem that this is sufficient to establish the fact that the "the unpardonable sin" of this passage, is not the sin

against the Holy Ghost of Matt. 12:31,32. That sin, obviously may be committed by all, whether saint or sinner (as we shall hereafter show); this sin is open only to children of God; it follows therefore, that this is not to be confused with that sin.

The answer to the question is, we think, easily discoverable, and indeed, lies clearly on the surface of the Book of I John. It will be recalled that John in chapter one, asserts: "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:7,9). Those who walk in the light have the promise that from all sin they will be cleansed in the blood of Christ; and those who confess their sins likewise have the assurance that they will be absolved from all unrighteousness. It should be carefully observed however, that such cleansing is conditioned on (1) walking in the light; (2) confessing sins. Those who thus do have every assurance of salvation; those who are cleansed from sin and absolved from unrighteousness are, beyond doubt, acceptable in the Beloved. That Christians may always maintain this state they are admonished to "confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed." This suggests the intimate relationship that subsists between believers; it is their duty to approach the throne of grace on behalf of each other and pray one for another that their faith "fail not." If further evidence is needed to establish such dependence between children of God, be it remembered

that Paul to the Galatians said, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). It follows, therefore, that Christians are required to (1) confess their faults one to another; (2) pray one for another; and (3), use care and kindness in restoring the erring.

These facts premised, we are ready for the conclusion, drawn from them: erring children are required to "confess" their sins; those who thus do are promised complete forgiveness—they are thereupon cleansed from "all unrighteousness." Hence, since the Lord will forgive every sin an erring child confesses, and since there is a sin which the Lord will not forgive, does it not follow as certainly as the night the day that this is simply a sin which a brother will not confess? To make the matter plainer, if possible, we put it in the form of a syllogism thus: (1) The Lord will forgive every sin a man confesses; (2) There is a sin (the unpardonable sin of John 5:16) which the Lord will not forgive; therefore (3) the sin which the Lord will not forgive, is a sin which a brother will not confess!

If, therefore, I see my erring brother manifest impenitence, it is useless for me to approach the Lord in his behalf; he has, himself, shut the door of heaven in his face. However, if my erring brother shows signs of penitence, I may, in fact, should, beseech the Lord to extend his promised pardon in such cases.

Concluding, it has been shown that Christians

may sin; sin unto death; sin beyond the possibility of restoration. Such sins are sins of impenitence; and for them, heaven has made no proffer of mercy. The Lord however, has promised to extend his sovereign grace to all who will confess their sins, and from them turn away. For such sins brethren may pray one for another with assurance that they will be heard.

SERMON NUMBER FOUR

What is the Sin Against the Holy Spirit?

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

This, with the parallel statements in Matt. 3: 28-30, and Luke 12:10, is the sum of what the Scriptures teach on the sin against the Holy Spirit; and yet, in spite of the scarcity of material thereon, there are few passages, if any, that have occasioned more concern, or about which more questions have been asked, than this. Some, indeed, are obsessed with the idea that they have committed this sin, and thenceforth do nothing to gain heaven, feeling that all effort to this end would be in vain; others live in daily fear of thus sinning eternally; and all Bible students are interested in a question of such far reaching import as this.

What then, is the sin against the Holy Spirit? It is not the "Unpardonable Sin" of I John 5:16. The reader is referred to the sermon just preceding

this, entitled "What is the Unpardonable Sin?" for proof of this fact. We would again call the reader's attention to the fact that, in our opinion, the sin against the Holy Spirit involves a definite condition, not characteristic of other sins. This distinction is important. True, all sin is, in a measure, against the Holy Spirit, and the sin against the Holy Spirit is, indeed, unpardonable; but we repeat, not in that special sense *the sin against the Holy Spirit*, is. It possesses a character all its own, a character not possessed by other sins. This will clearly appear, we think, as this study proceeds.

Neither is the sin against the Holy Spirit mere postponement of obedience until death overtakes one, thus rendering such obedience impossible. While this is "a" sin against the Spirit in the sense that every sin that is contrary to the will of the Spirit is against the Spirit, it is not "the sin against the Holy Spirit," contemplated in the passage under review. A bit of reflection is sufficient to convince one of this fact. Those who, through negligence or carelessness, delay their obedience until it is too late, might have, at any time prior to death, rendered such obedience and have been saved: whereas, those who sin against the Holy Spirit, as the context indicates, can, and do, thus sin, and continue living, having forevermore lost, all possibility of salvation. In the one, the disobedience that condemns is not completed until death; in the other, (the sin against the Holy Spirit), the one having thus sinned continues to live. This, indeed, is the essential difference between the two.

Others have concluded that the possibility of

thus sinning is open only to Christians, on the ground that only Christians are in possession of the Spirit. This however, proves too much: only Christians possess God and Christ, shall we thence conclude that only Christians can sin against them? We may therefore dismiss as unworthy of further consideration, this view.

Strangely enough, some have considered suicide the sin against the Holy Spirit. This view doubtless arose from the fact that such characters are unable to repent of the deed done; and must therefore appear in judgment without the possibility of repentance. It is not likely however, that any sane person ever committed suicide. As long as reason sits enthroned, it is impossible for one to be guilty of self-destruction: this is nature's most immutable law. It seems most unlikely to this writer that people who die by their own hand will be held accountable for the deed. Such an act cannot, by the wildest imagination, be logically associated with the sin under consideration here. What then, is the sin?

The passage asserts that those who sin against Christ may expect forgiveness; it implies that those who sin against God can likewise be forgiven; but those who sin against the Holy Spirit can expect no forgiveness, "neither in this world, neither in the world to come." What is the significance of this latter phrase, "neither in this world, neither in the world to come?" Some have understood the word "world," "life," and have thence concluded that he meant to say that those who sin will be forgiven "neither in this life, neither in the life to come," assuming that reference is made both to this period

and that which is to come. This view we think to be clearly erroneous. Question: Will there be *any* sins committed and forgiven in the next life? The word translated "world" in this passage frequently means "age," or "dispensation." For example, Jesus promised the apostles, following the great commission as recorded by Matthew (28:18-20), that he would be with them, "even unto the end of the age," or dispensation. So here, Jesus declared that those who commit this sin need expect no forgiveness, "neither in this age, neither in the age to come." Be it remembered, however, that these words were uttered during the Jewish age. Hence the significance of the passage is this: Those who sin against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven, "neither in this age, the Mosiac dispensation, neither in the age which is to come, the Christian dispensation."

The view widely prevails that the sin against the Holy Spirit consisted in attributing the work of Christ to powers bestowed upon him by Beelzebub, the prince of devils. To blaspheme is to speak "impiously or reproachfully" of one; and this, unquestionably is what the Pharisees did, when they conceded the miraculous work of the Savior, but charged that it was done through interposition of demons. Were the sin committed only in this way, it would follow that it could not be committed in this age. We cannot legitimately limit it to this act alone; any repudiation of the Spirit would, in principle, be such a sin. The following illustration will, we think, suggest the scope thereof: A man is floating down a river; below him are dangerous rapids, over which, if he passes, he goes to his doom. A short

distance above these rapids, a man sees him going toward sudden destruction, and shouts a warning, and at the same time makes a proffer of assistance. The warning is ignored. Farther down the river a second man shouts a similar warning; this, too, is rejected, and the man continues toward his doom. Just before he passes over the rapids, a third man makes a final proffer of assistance, and this being refused, the doomed man plunges into the maelstrom and is lost. Three offers of assistance were made, the acceptance of any one of which would have saved the man from his fate. He might, indeed, have rejected number one, and heeded number two, and have been saved; in fact, he might have rejected numbers one and two, and have found salvation from doom by acceptance of number three. When this final offer of assistance was refused, his doom was inevitable.

When the first "Pair in Paradise" transgressed the commandments of Jehovah, and treated with contempt his precepts, justice would have permitted destruction of the race; mercy, however, intervened, and the wayward and rebellious man was given ample opportunity to return to Jehovah. A long-suffering God, through the prophets, pleaded with man to return to him and find clemency; but, for the most part, the tearful pleadings of his prophets fell on the deaf ears of a disobedient and gainsaying people. In the fullness of time, his only begotten Son was sent into the world; he, too, was rejected, and made to die a felon's death on the tree of the cross. Still the mercy of God was not at an end, for on the first Pentecost after the resurrection, he dis-

patched his spirit back to earth's remotest bounds, led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. The apostles, as ambassadors, were endowed with plenary powers to declare unto the race the means of pardon, and to guard them against the possibility of error, they were immersed in the Holy Spirit, whose coming was for the express purpose of "guiding" them into all the truth. It follows, therefore, that the message of the apostles is heaven's last proffer of mercy to mankind. He who rejects it, and expects salvation by some other plan, refuses, in so doing the last offer of salvation, and fixes his doom.

What is this plan? By the behests of the Holy Spirit, the Sacred Penmen inform us that one must believe (Heb. 11:6), repent (Luke 13:3), confess (Rom. 10:10), be baptized (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3; I Pet. 3:21). Those who are obedient thereto, have assurance of heaven's amnesty; those who spurn it, commit an eternal sin. For all such an inevitable doom awaits. It should not be supposed however, that this sin is committed in an instant, or that one plunges into it at a single bound. The awful pathway that leads finally to this sin is marked, in the Scriptures, by certain well-defined steps, steps easily traceable, therein. (1) It is possible to "grieve" the Holy Spirit, as a child grieves its parents by conduct inconsistent with their wishes; (2) "resist" the Spirit, by repelling his influence; and (3) "quench" the Spirit by killing his power in the heart (Eph. 4:30; Acts 7:51; I Thess. 5:20). Gospel preachers have occasion often to see this done again and again. Not infrequently, there are those who, while the invitation song is being sung are

visibly agitated; the difficulty with which they resist the call of mercy is observable in their demeanor; it is obvious that the power of the gospel is striving mightily in their hearts. By constantly resisting its impulses, its power over them gradually wanes, until finally, its influence is effectually quenched, *and the sin against the Holy Spirit has been committed!* To this class may be added the multitudes whose hearts have been closed to the New Testament messages by denominational preachers and who are, therefore, beyond the reach of the gospel. Also included are those who have obeyed the gospel, but have drifted so far in sin that it is impossible to "renew them again unto repentance." These are they whose latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

Reader: Are you an alien sinner, or an erring child of the king? If so, do you feel the slightest impulse to bow to the mandates of the crucified one and accept his overtures of mercy? If you do, this is satisfactory evidence that you have not sinned thus eternally. But if, when mercy entreats and divine grace pleads you feel no answering impulse, if there stirs within you no longing to fall at his feet and supplicate his favor, you stand perilously near the awful chasm. Delay no longer, but flee quickly to his arms, ere it is too late.

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