

CRUCIFYING THE SON OF GOD AFRESH

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The fear of the unpardonable sin has distressed many sincere people. It discourages some and keeps them away from the joyous eternal life that the Lord wants them to experience.

They are told repeatedly that the unpardonable sin is continued, persistent sinning, to the point that they can no longer hear the Voice of the Holy Spirit. But almost everybody in the world can realize that he/she has indeed sinned in one way or another, persistently, continually.

We must look again at the context of what Jesus Himself said about the unpardonable sin; it's in Matthew 12:22-37:

(a) Jesus healed someone demon-possessed. "All the multitudes were amazed" and wondered positively if Jesus might be the long-awaited Messiah (as we today wonder if our long-awaited "Elijah" may have already begun his work of "turning hearts"). But "the Pharisees . . . said, "This fellow . . . casts out demons . . . by the ruler of the demons,"" Satan himself. They reacted negatively to the nth degree.

(b) This had already happened earlier, in 9:34; these leaders of the one true church of that day had already attributed the work of Jesus to Satan (which is the unpardonable sin) but now Jesus has given them another chance to repent; but they have repeated that awful sin. Jesus then goes on to tell the Pharisees that "if I cast out devils by the [Holy]

Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" and you didn't know it, or recognize the blessing!

(c) These church leaders went on and on in their way until they felt driven to cry out in Pilate's presence "Crucify Him"! (It makes one want to hesitate before accepting any job as church pastor or leader—it's a frightfully dangerous place to be in unless we walk "softly" as King Ahab did when he repented, 1 Kings 21:27-29.)

(d) The way Matthew (ch. 12) and Luke (ch. 11) tell the story about the Pharisees, the people would have been willing to believe the truth and repent, but their church leaders hindered them and "in a great degree" blocked the way.

(e) This action of the Pharisees was the Unpardonable Sin.

Fortunately, our God is so kind and merciful that He will pardon the terrible mistake of mistaking the devil's work for God's. What He will not pardon is the complementary error of mistaking God's work for the devil's—the unpardonable sin consists (in part) of attributing the devils the work of the Holy Spirit (that you know without a proof text being cited). Evidently because the latter can have in it no element of deception—the thing being observed is not a counterfeit but the genuine. It is pitiful to be found out a *fool*—most humiliating, but not spiritually fatal. But to combine in one individual the offices of a fool in committing the first error mentioned above, and also the sin of the second in committing the unpardonable sin, is the most tragic

situation a man can be in. Let's not repeat it. But if you fear and tremble, there's hope! Thank God.

There are sincere people who are scared almost out of their wits by reading Hebrews 6:4-6. The passage says: "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame."

It is indeed serious business! The Father was happy to hear the prayer of Jesus, to forgive us for crucifying His Son when we did it "not knowing what [we] do." But if we do it again in full knowledge of what we are doing, that's it; no more repentance. But many sincere people misread the text and bring darkness upon themselves. They realize that since they were originally converted they have backslid, and they assume that now God has turned against them. But the text doesn't say that. It does not say that God will not forgive, again and again; it merely says that those who crucify Christ afresh are refusing to accept the gift of repentance. You can be forgiven for any sin that you repent of. That gift of repentance is yours for the taking.

The Greek text uses the present tense: the problem is a willful, ongoing process of re-crucifying Christ "afresh," on and on, that is, refusing to repent.

If you see ever so tiny a ray of light shining somewhere, do not give up; tell your dear heavenly

Father that you want to repent; ask Him to give you the precious gift; receive it; accept it. And rejoice in His pardoning love. Then go right to work to help somebody else with a word of Good News. Happiness is yours!

There's a precious lesson in the story of good King Hezekiah that the church of today is hungering to understand—the truth of unconscious sin. He was a good "Laodicean," right at home among us because blissfully unaware of the true condition of his heart. Jesus says of Laodicea, "You don't know your true condition" of heart (Rev. 3:17). Neither did Hezekiah know. When praying to be healed he felt sure that "I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart" (Isa. 38:3), giving himself an A+. He was sincere! But he did not realize that buried deep inside his heart was sin waiting only an opportunity to manifest itself. "Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, *God left him*, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart" (2 Chr. 32:31).

During those renewed fifteen years, Hezekiah undid the good done previously. Unconscious sin does not incur guilt, for we don't know how to "confess" it. We don't know it exists. But nonetheless, unconscious sin is lethal. It can crucify Christ afresh (Jesus prayed for His crucifiers, "They know not what they do!").

Hezekiah's sincerely unknown sin burst into the open when his pride took over with the Babylonian messengers sent "to inquire of the wonder that was

done in the land” (2 Chron. 32:31), to hear the gospel. Instead, he deprived them of what they were hungry for, and regaled them with a display of his riches (denominational pride?). Result: (a) he opened the gate for Babylon’s eventual return, leading to ultimate national ruin. (b) During these extra years he sired Manasseh, the most wicked of all kings (who caused rivers of blood to flow in Jerusalem’s streets). The eventual national disaster was due to “Manasseh, son of Hezekiah” (15:4).

In this Day of Atonement, all buried, unknown sin must be brought out in the open, recognized, confessed, forsaken, and repented of, through the Holy Spirit’s “conviction.” That’s what is happening today in the “cleansing of the sanctuary.” One wise writer says, “Don’t resist our Lord in His office work.”

Have you ever had the problem of keeping the Sabbath in your mind? The Lord (in mercy to our souls) asks us to “call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable. . . . not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words” (Isa. 58:13). Those are all “doings.”

What about when the mind keeps on “working” at worldly, mundane things on the Sabbath? Like planning, inventing, purposing? When the sun goes down to usher in God’s holy day at Sabbath eve, and your mind goes racing on with worldly worries or ideas, what can you “do”?

Sabbath-keeping is a matter of the heart; that is, you can outwardly “do” everything right while inwardly you are breaking the Sabbath. It’s the

same sort of problem (in principle) that Jesus spoke of when He said that lust mentally indulged is adultery already (Matt. 5:27-30). Letting the mind have its way in worldly thinking—isn’t that also Sabbath-breaking?

It follows that the solution is (in principle) the same as for lustful fantasizing—“crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal. 5:24). That’s what Jesus said is the solution to the inward, mental sexual lust: “pluck out [the adulterous eye] and cast it from you” or “cut off [the adulterous] right hand and cast it from you” (Matt. 5:29). It’s the mental heart-choice to die rather than yield to the sinful temptation and crucify Christ afresh (cf. Heb. 6:6). What the issue resolves itself to be (ultimately) is: (a) crucify Christ “afresh” or (b) let self be “crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20).

It all begins in the mind. “As [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Pr. 23:7). The thoughts cherished will eventually govern the conduct outwardly. Deep in the thoughts is where the battle is decided, where we “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12). It’s the fight to believe when every ounce of your being seems to push you the other way. It’s “bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). Choose; stamp your mental foot, and demand that self yield to Christ. You will overcome.

Can an ordinary individual enjoy the blessings of the New Covenant even though the majority in “the body” of the church do not?

To answer this question, the Lord in His great mercy has given us the psalms of David. Over and over David cries to the Lord for deliverance when

he is alone in his distress. As an individual in the nation of Israel, he is highly significant because the Messiah is declared to be “the son of David”—not merely in DNA physical descent but because Jesus is spiritually “the son of David.”

In other words, in His earthly life, in His incarnation, Jesus’ mentor was David in his psalms. He lived in those psalms; He saw Himself in them.

We may nod our heads in agreement, but then what about those imprecatory psalms? David prayed that the Lord would punish his enemies, even destroy them; do we have a record that Jesus prayed that His Father would harass and destroy His Sanhedrim enemies who wanted to crucify Him? No; we have the record that He prayed that His Father would forgive them, “for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Are those bitter, imprecatory psalms not inspired, or do they not apply to “the son of David”? Should we follow David and pray down curses on those who oppose us?

One of God’s most precious New Covenant promises He made to Abraham was that “I will . . . curse him that curseth thee” (Gen. 12:3); David lived under that New Covenant promise.

Jesus did, too. His prayer for forgiveness for those who crucified Him was specific—only so long as they “know not what they do.” Behold in the horror of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. the fulfillment of that New Covenant “curse” on those who determine to “crucify Christ afresh and bring Him to an open shame” (Heb. 6:6).

Humble, helpless soul, let the Lord defend you in your distress. Don’t try to stop Him; He must fulfill

His word, and it is both His “goodness and severity” (Rom. 11:22).

The Lord Jesus Christ has done something, accomplished something, for the entire human race. To say it in terms that the Hindus can understand: He has paid the debt of *karma* that everybody owes.

Understanding this, the Samaritans at Sychar declared Jesus to be “the Savior of the world” (John 4:42); not that He would merely like-to-be, but He actually, literally, is “the Savior of the world.”

They were right; they had immediately taken the glorious step in understanding the gospel that theologians sometimes miss in searching for a lifetime. What many fail to grasp is Paul’s paradigm of contrast: “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Rom. 5:20).

No one can deny that sin has abounded more and more, especially in this Daniel’s “time of the end” (Dan. 12:4); what we want to grasp is that in this cosmic race, the grace of Christ has thus far always kept ahead of the abounding sin. But that cannot not always be true.

There must come a time when His “much more abounding grace” reaches its limit. God is infinite indeed; but His grace is not infinite.

The “much more abounding grace” of Christ abounded sufficiently to enable Him to pray “Father, forgive them” for those who crucified Him the first time at Calvary (Luke 23:34); but when in the full light of revelation the world chooses to enforce the mark of the beast and thereby chooses to crucify Christ the second time and “put Him to an open

shame” (Heb. 6:4-6), that “much more abounding grace” will have passed its almost (but not!) infinite limit. It will be the unpardonable sin for the world (with the exception of those who gain the victory over the mark of the beast).

Can an individual take this fatal step? Yes; thus let us today remember both “the goodness and the severity” of the Lord (Rom. 11:22). “Perfect love [*agape*] casts out fear—that is, all but the denial itself of *agape*.”

So, let us walk “softly” before the Lord as repentant King Ahab finally did (1 Kings 21:27-29). You’d be surprised to have formerly wicked King Ahab for a neighbor in the New Jerusalem, wouldn’t you? If so, and it may be so, that would be “the goodness . . . of the Lord”!

You have a loved one for whom you are praying. Often our beloved family members are those whom we find most difficult to help spiritually; something in the past has built a wall between us. You plead in prayer, “Please, Lord, I don’t know what to do or say! Let some good angel lead him/her to salvation.”

There is some special Good News in the Bible put there to encourage us: “If anyone sees his brother [sister] sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He [God] will give him [the one praying] life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say he should pray about that. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death” (1 John 5:16, 17, NKJV). Let us glean the Good News:

(1) If you feel a heart-burden for the salvation of someone, you can know that it is the Holy Spirit who gives you that burden. He would never burden you to pray for someone who has committed the unpardonable sin.

(2) “Sin not leading to death” is obviously still sin, but it is sin which the sinner is capable of repenting of. If it is never repented of, then of course it becomes “sin leading to death”.

(3) The solution that God has for the problem is to give YOU “life” for that person, not somebody else or even an angel.

(4) The reason is that God knows that nobody else can be as efficient an agent in reaching that person as you can be.

(5) That means you need repentance yourself, great sensitivity, and insight, to discern what to do or say and what not to do or say. Sometimes the first good step is to say nothing, to get out of the way of the Holy Spirit, to give Him some freedom to work without your interference. It can be a real blessing to learn how to pray for someone without nagging him/her.

(6) When and if it comes time to say something, then is when the Holy Spirit will “give [you] life” for that person; knowing what and how to say it—that’s worth praying about VERY seriously!

(7) And just remember the Lord loves that person more than you do!

Someone says, “Yes, I know that Jesus died for the world; He tasted our second death; He redeemed us by His sacrifice; but I don’t feel worthy because I have sinned. How do I know that I am

included in His sacrifice? I don't *feel* like He accepts me!"

Let's look at an example of a man who knew he was a sinner, for he was doubly one—an adulterer and a murderer at the same time: David. Yes, he came within a hair's breadth of committing the unpardonable sin, for he prays in Psalm 51:11, "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." He had gone a whole year in impenitence after committing the foul deeds. Could he ever find acceptance with God?

(1) He confessed his sin openly, fully, honestly (vs. 3).

(2) He realized that his sin was a re-crucifixion of the Lamb of God (vs. 4), thus delivering him from the whimpering, selfish fear of getting AIDS or Herpes, or losing his job, or embarrassment, etc. as the result of his sin. In the light of the cross, he learned to *abhor* his sin! (vs. 17).

(3) He saw that sin permeated every cell of his being and of his soul (vs. 5, 6). He pleaded no "but" to excuse it even 1%.

(4) He took the absolutely necessary step of believing that God forgave his heinous sin—at the cost of the shed blood of the Son of God (vss. 7-10). You can't truly believe in the forgiveness of sins unless your soul is humbled in the dust by realizing the enormity of sin itself.

(5) David pleaded, begged, for cleansing of soul, not just legal "pardon" (vs. 10).

(6) He realized that the "blood-guiltiness" of his soul included guilt of the blood of the Son of God (vs. 14, 4; compare Acts 2:36; 4:14, 15).

(7) David consecrated the rest of his life to missionary, soul-saving work, a new career (Ps. 51:12, 13). Did he know that God had "accepted" him? Yes; he realized that no Band-aid could help him; he had been saved from the deepest hell itself.

Why is it not a sin to *feel* that you are forsaken by God, but if you say that you *are* forsaken by God, it becomes a sin? The answer is the difference between temptation and sin. A thousand temptations do not equal one sin; the sin comes in *yielding* to the temptation, choosing to disbelieve.

When you are tempted to *feel* forsaken by God, you are being tested and tried (probably everyone has been so tempted at some time). But when you say "I *am* forsaken by God!" you have sinned because you have denied and contradicted the word of God: "He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Heb. 12:5).

Jesus conquered temptation by quoting Scripture to Satan, "It is written." You do the same! When you are tempted to feel forsaken by God, quote that precious text, over and over again. And because you have overcome that temptation, you will be able to encourage others who are so tempted. You will actually win souls; for there are many people who need the testimony of someone who has been tempted as they are tempted, but who has won the victory by faith.

You may ask, "But maybe I have committed the unpardonable sin! If so, has God forsaken me?" The unpardonable sin is not *God* forsaking the sinner, but the *sinner* forsaking God. He still loves the person who has committed that sin (if he has!),

but the sinner has burnt out his antenna and cannot receive the forgiveness “signal” from God. If you can catch even the faintest signal from the Holy Spirit assuring you of God’s faithful love, cherish it; don’t let Satan overwhelm you with discouragement because you know you have sinned. It’s sinners that Christ has come to save. We rob Him what is His due if we withhold ourselves from Him. Don’t accept Satan’s judgment; appeal over his head to the Supreme Court of heaven—Christ Himself.

I have been visiting patients in a rehab hospital and nursing home who are taking exercises, learning all over again how to walk. They have been in an accident, or had a stroke. They exercise those flabby muscles, and they overcome. So can you “exercise” your faith; choose to believe that promise, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee!” (Perhaps someone out there is elderly; if so, cherish this prayer: “Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not until I have showed Thy strength unto this generation,” that is, told them the Good News of the gospel (Ps. 71:17, 18).

If a child of God, perhaps a new convert, or one who is immature and weak, stumbles and staggers and falls into sin, what is God’s attitude toward him? Does God remove from him His grace until he repents and is converted anew? This question perplexes many people. For example, King David: he has committed adultery with Bathsheba; if he should die of a heart attack, is he a lost man?

According to David himself, he realized that he came within a hair’s breadth of being lost; he was

terribly afraid that he had committed the unpardonable sin (see Ps. 51:11). Yes, there is *great* danger in sin. But is it because God cuts off His grace from us? Or could it be that we cut ourselves off?

The apostle John says there are two kinds of sin: (1) “There is a sin not unto death.” We can pray for such a person. (2) “There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for it” (1 Jn. 5:16, 17). And John pleads with us: “My little children, . . . I write unto you, that ye sin not.” But suppose someone stumbles into it? “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous” (2:1).

Please note: the “advocate” is still there even if we have sinned! John goes on to say that “He is [present tense] the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (vs. 2). There is only one possible conclusion: Christ is the second Adam of the world, “the Savior of the world” (Jn. 4:42), “the Savior of all men” (1 Tim. 4:10). He has encircled the world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air we breathe, says the little book *Steps to Christ* (p. 62).

The immature Christian who has fallen in to sin has the same “Advocate” or “propitiation” as “the whole world” has! Paul enlarges on this truth in Hebrews 10:26-29: for anyone who has committed the unpardonable sin, “there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.” The unpardonable sin is serious!

But . . . and this “but” is important: for anyone who has not committed that final irrevocable sin, there *does* “remain a sacrifice for sins”! God’s grace is

still given, not merely offered, to him. Christ's "sacrifice" still avails, because His grace still "remaineth"!

This week-end all around the world millions will be studying especially into the meaning of "the mark of the beast" and "the seal of God" of the Book of Revelation (7:1-4; 13:11-17). World history will eventuate finally in every one accepting one or the other. According to the Bible picture, this final development must come before Christ can return as He promised.

Careful study brings one to the conclusion that the ultimate issue will be the message of justification by faith, because the three "angels" that proclaim the final message will be presenting "the everlasting gospel" (14:6, 7; the second and "third" follow the first). That being so, the underlying issue in this great conflict between the seal of God and the mark of the beast must be the Good News of salvation by grace through faith-the best Good News anyone can hear.

Amazingly, the great Enemy of righteousness will so confuse and deceive the world that multitudes will accept a counterfeit "righteousness by faith" so cleverly devised that "if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Mt. 24:24). It will be necessary to distinguish between "the sign of the cross" and the reality of the cross. A correct understanding of "the truth of the gospel" means a true heart-appreciation of what the Son of God accomplished by His sacrifice.

Then the bottom line finally emerges: it's a sin to be deceived! In fact, in the final scene of the great

drama, the believing of the deception of the mark of the beast will constitute the unpardonable sin which will call for ultimate judgment (see Rev. 14:9-11).

Wow! This looks like serious business! Understanding the gospel of justification by faith is "better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it, . . . yea, [it is] durable riches and righteousness" (Pr. 8:11, 18).