



"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2)

December 2015

No. 360

SINNING WILLFULLY

Sin is the ever present foe of the Christian. No matter how hard we try, we can never escape sin; our own and that of others around us. Living according to God's laws will provide the best possible life for us here in this world and guarantee us eternal life with the father in Heaven. It is indeed unfortunate that we cannot control our passions and live the perfect life.

Although we can never reach a point where we do not sin, that does not give us the right or reason to not try. James made the statement that *"pure religion and undefiled before God and the*

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Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (Jas. 1:27). We will never be perfect in our service to others or in our attempt to avoid sin, but we should give our best effort to do both.

This leads to the idea of sinning willfully. This comes from Hebrews 10:26 which says, *“For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.”* So what does it mean to sin willfully? And for that matter, what does it mean to sin unwillfully?

Wilfully is from the Greek *hekousiōs*, which Thayer defines as “voluntarily, willingly, of one’s own accord. To sin willfully as opposed to sins committed inconsiderately, and from ignorance or from weakness.”

Our main purpose here is to contrast those sins committed willfully with those committed in weakness. All of us find our resolve weak at times and before we realize it we have thought, said, or done something we know is wrong. We may be instantly sorrowful, but there is no changing the fact that we sinned. These moments of weakness should become fewer in number as we mature spiritually.

Sinning willfully, however, is a very different matter. When we very calmly and carefully create a plan to do something we know is wrong and then with no hesitation follow through with it, this is sinning willfully. At this point we are in complete and open rebellion against God.

Consider the situation of a person involved in a conversation who, in order to spare someone’s feelings, tells a lie. It is a sin, but it was done in a moment of weakness. Contrast this with a person who spends hours or days carefully crafting a story

intended to deceive someone. They have both sinned, but the second person is in a far more serious situation. To address why that is the case, let us return to Hebrews Chapter 10.

This was not a general statement but referred to a particular sin. The previous verse (25) is one most are familiar with. *“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”* He is saying that not assembling together once we know the Lord’s intent in this matter, is sinning willfully.

There is any number of reasons why we might not be able to attend the assembly. We could be sick, in the hospital, in jail, in an accident, broken down on the side of the road, etc. The point is that our intent needs to be to make it there and that we have done what we could to get there.

If Sunday morning rolls around and we are sitting in a fishing boat, in a deer stand, headed to a ball game, or just lying in bed because we don’t want to get up, then that is a problem. We have consciously and willfully made the decision that some other activity is more important than assembling together as the Lord had commanded us.

The reason that he said there *“remaineth no more sacrifice for sins”* (v. 26), is because he is referring to the first day of the week assembly where the Lord’s Supper is served. How do we know this? Let’s continue reading.

But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: 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? (Heb. 10:27-29)

At a time when a Christian should be assembled together with other Christians commemorating the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord, they have willfully chosen to ignore this and do something else instead. They have, to paraphrase the above passage, considered Jesus' blood of little or no value. By their actions, they have rejected Jesus' sacrifice and the shedding of His blood.

If we reject Jesus, then what other sacrifice can we use to receive forgiveness of our sins? None, of course. This is what was pointed out to us in verse 26 when he said *"there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins."*

Anytime we are willfully sinning we are in very grave danger. It is not that we cannot be forgiven but that we are unlikely to sincerely ask to be forgiven. We will all continue to have moments of weakness that lead to sin as long as we are in this corruptible body of flesh. God knows this and understands our situation. We do not, however, have to allow ourselves to willfully plan and execute sinful behaviors.

As Paul said, *"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof"* (Rom. 6:12). The weakness of the flesh will always lead us into sin from time to time. That is very different from allowing sin to reign over us and be our master.

Paul went on to say, *"know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto*

righteousness?” (Rom. 6:16). And then in verse 18, “*being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.*” He did not say free of sin, for we are still vulnerable to temptation, but free from sin because we have rejected it as our master and embraced God instead.

We will conclude with the remainder of the passage in Hebrews 10. It demonstrates how God views the particular willful sin under discussion in that place. “*For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*” (v. 30-31). God is merciful and forgiving to those who serve Him fully. But he is just as unforgiving to those who serve sin instead.

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APOLOGIA

QUESTION: What is grace?

ANSWER: There are many different definitions for the word *grace* as it pertains to references in the Bible. Most all definitions tie together and are seen as the forgiveness and kindness of God. A good verse to show this is Ephesians 2:5-10:

Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the

gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Another example is in 2 Timothy 1:9:

Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

This brings up a debate that has lasted for centuries. Do we not have to fully follow what we know as the plan of salvation that includes believing, being baptized, and following God's will because all that we need to be saved is grace? The best answer is that this verse does not mean that we are only saved by grace because the passage in Ephesians ends with "*created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*" (v. 10) showing that we are expected to walk in good works in addition to being blessed with God's grace.

In Romans 6:14-15, it says: "*For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.*"

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We are not under a law that basically says if you do the crime you do the time, but we are under God's grace that says if you repent of your sins, God will forgive you. His grace abounds and is there for us, even when we do not really deserve it. All that we have to do is follow His will for our lives and live the best that we can, striving to be more Christ-like in everything that we do.

Grace is also seen as a gift that is given by God.

Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. (Rom. 15:15-16)

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; (Eph. 3:8)

Both passages speak of the grace given by God to allow Paul to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

In 1 Corinthians 15:9-11, Paul also talked about it being the grace of God that allowed him to go from persecuting Christians to laboring for God:

For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

As you see, grace is used in a similar context throughout the New Testament. No matter the purpose, grace is a gift from God. It is something that should not be taken lightly, but should be appreciated and seen as a blessing.

A. D.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. What city did Lot live in that was destroyed by fire and brimstone?
2. What were the names of Joseph's two sons?
3. Who convinced King Zedekiah to take Jeremiah out of the dungeon?
4. Which king did Paul "almost" persuade to be a Christian?
5. According to Ephesians, what piece of the armor of God is righteousness?

...and remember last month's questions?

1. What bird could poor people use for sacrifices if they could not afford lambs? TURTLEDOVES OR PIGEONS (Leviticus 5:7)
2. In the time of the Judges, civil war broke out against which tribe? BENJAMIN (Judges 20)
3. Who walked barefoot and naked for three years at the Lord's command? ISAIAH (Isaiah 20:2-3)
4. Which gospel records the fewest of the miracles performed by Jesus? JOHN (John 1-21)
5. Paul, Timothy, and who else sent their greetings to Thessalonica? SILVANUS (1 Thessalonians 1:1)