

What do you *mean*—
“The
Unpardonable
Sin”?

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by Herbert W. Armstrong

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Can a Christian commit a SIN, AND STILL BE A CHRISTIAN? Or would this be “the unpardonable sin”? Or would it prove he never was a Christian? Thousands worry, because they do not UNDERSTAND what IS the sin that shall never be forgiven.

NOT SO LONG AGO, a professing Christian — a prominent churchman, of what denomination I never knew — was murdered for allegedly committing adultery. Many said, “That man was no Christian! No real Christian could ever commit adultery.”

I never knew the man. I merely read of it in the newspapers. It is not for me to judge whether he *had ever been* really a Christian — or, for that matter, whether he was guilty of the alleged adultery.

But, as a hypothetical case, what if a professing Christian *did* commit adultery? Would *that* prove he *never was* a Christian? Or, suppose he *had been* a genuinely converted man, utterly sincere in his Christian life, and that he did commit the adultery. Could he *still* be a really converted Christian after committing the adultery? — or was the adultery, under those circumstances, “the unpardonable sin”? Would God forgive, *on repentance*?

THAT question I *can* answer!

Many Worry

Many have come to me, worried, and said: “I’m afraid I have committed the unpardonable sin.”

I have replied, “You probably haven’t.”

But they will persist, “Yes, but I consented, *in my mind*, to commit that sin. Sure I was *tempted* — and I tried to resist it in my mind, but the more I resisted, the more I *wanted* to do it — until, finally, I just gave in, and consented in my mind, to do it. I did it *knowingly*. Wasn’t that sinning *willfully*? Wasn’t that the unpardonable sin?”

LET’S UNDERSTAND what is meant by “sinning *willfully*,” and by what is called “the unpardonable sin.”

Many Deceived

Jesus Christ spoke of a certain special kind of SIN — popularly called "the unpardonable sin" — which "shall NOT be forgiven . . . neither in this world, neither in the world to come" (Matt. 12:31-32).

Is this sin committed only by converted Christians — or also by non-Christians?

Is *every* sin committed by a converted Christian unpardonable? Or can a Christian commit a sin, repent, be forgiven, and still remain a Christian?

First, we need to UNDERSTAND, more clearly than most do, *what constitutes* a Christian in God's sight — according to the BIBLE. I want to make PLAIN some factors you probably have never understood!

The Bible teaching does not altogether agree with the dictionary definition, nor with the popular idea that has gained general acceptance in the so-called Christian world.

Webster's Dictionary defines a Christian as: "One who believes, or professes or is assumed to believe, in Jesus Christ, and the truth taught by Him."

The BIBLE replies: "Thou believest that there is one God, thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble" (James 2:19).

Today many professing Christians — and most of the "tracts" passed out purporting to show "sinners" how to "get saved" — how to become a Christian — quote one verse, Acts 16:31, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Notice, this passage does NOT say, as they appear to ASSUME, "Believe . . . and then thou ART ALREADY saved." It says "shall be" (FUTURE tense) saved. Assuredly this *believing on Christ* is necessary, yet other Biblical passages make plain that this is NOT ALL that constitutes "being saved."

BELIEVERS Seek to Kill Jesus

In John 7:31, it is recorded: "And many of the people *believed on Him . . .*" But were they really Christians? Notice, beginning with John 8:30: "As He spake these words, many *be-*

lied on Him. Then Jesus said to those Jews *which believed on Him*, 'If ye continue in my Word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed. . . .' But they *did not* actually BELIEVE HIM! They believed ON HIM — that He was a great teacher, as a man — they believed on the PERSON — like millions today. But they did not BELIEVE Him — did not believe what He *said* — His Message — His Gospel. To these same people, who "believed on Him," Jesus said, just a few verses farther on, ". . . but ye seek to kill me, because MY WORD hath no place in you . . . But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God . . . and if I say the truth, *why do ye not believe me?*" (John 8:31-46.)

They "believed on the Lord Jesus Christ," just as these cheap tracts tell "sinners" to do to "be saved." Yet they tried to KILL the very Saviour they "BELIEVED ON." And they DID NOT BELIEVE *HIM* — did not believe what He said.

There is a DIFFERENCE between "believing ON Christ," and BELIEVING CHRIST! So here are two TRUTHS:

1) It may be hard to accept, but it's TRUE — millions who *believe* they are Christians actually are still unconverted, deceived, having accepted a *false* conversion!

2) MANY who, judged by this world's more popular "Christian" teachings, appear NOT to be Christians ARE, in actual fact, truly converted Christians IN GOD'S SIGHT!

Just What IS a "Christian"?

What, then, is a true "conversion"? WHAT constitutes a real Christian *in the sight of God*?

The WAY to become a Christian was given, in few words, on the very day that the New Testament Church of God began, by the apostle Peter. There were three steps. The first two, we humans must do. These do not "save" us, or make us Christians — they are merely required conditions. The third, GOD does.

They are: 1) REPENT, 2) be baptized (which is the outward action testifying to inward FAITH in Christ as Saviour — Acts 8:36-37), and 3) you shall receive THE GIFT of the HOLY SPIRIT (Acts 2:38).

Now consider one additional Scripture: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have NOT the Spirit of Christ, HE IS NONE OF HIS" (Rom. 8:9).

A Christian, then, (BIBLE DEFINITION) is one in whom the Holy Spirit dwells! The next (10th) verse speaks of the Holy Spirit of God dwelling IN you as CHRIST being *in* you — in this language: "And if Christ be in you. . ."

And the following (11th) shows how this will "save" — that is, give you the GIFT of ETERNAL LIFE — complete "salvation" — when it says: "But *IF* the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead *dwell in you*, He that raised up Christ from the dead *shall also* quicken your mortal bodies by *His Spirit* that dwelleth in you."

This passage shows that the final SALVATION means being GIVEN ETERNAL LIFE *at the time of*, and *through* the resurrection. It says, of that final GIFT of *being made* IMMORTAL, "He . . . *shall also*" (AS He raised Christ by a resurrection) — and note that it is *future tense* — "quicken your mortal bodies BY HIS SPIRIT which dwelleth in you."

Notice carefully! It is the Holy Spirit of God "dwelling in you" *at the time of* the resurrection. Or, more specifically, *at the end of this mortal life*. IF the Holy Spirit of God is "dwelling in you" *at that time*, which is the *time of* the second coming of Christ, (or at the time of your death, whichever comes first), THEN your mortal body will be resurrected, or CHANGED, to an immortal body — given ETERNAL life.

As long as the Holy Spirit of God dwells IN YOU, you are *Christ's* — that is, you ARE A CHRISTIAN. But (verse 9 of Romans 8, quoted above), "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, *he is none of His*" — he is NOT a Christian.

A Christian, then, in God's terms, is one who has, at the moment, God's HOLY SPIRIT dwelling in him.

BEFORE this change has taken place, he is NONE OF HIS — *not* a Christian. *IF* the Holy Spirit *no longer dwells* in him, then he is no longer a Christian. He is a Christian *while*, and *only while*, the Holy Spirit is dwelling in him.

Millions Deceived Into False "Salvation"

Millions may *profess* to be Christians, but *unless* God's Holy Spirit, given as HIS GIFT by GRACE, is, at the moment, dwelling in them, they are NOT CHRISTIANS.

Millions may have their names written in Church membership books, and still be "NONE OF HIS" — not really CHRISTIANS at all! And millions *are* so deceived!

So UNDERSTAND THIS! A person is a Christian — in God's sight — ONLY while God's Holy Spirit is dwelling IN him. Not before! Not after!

Must Bear "Fruit"

Next, to UNDERSTAND, it is important you realize that God's Spirit *will not* remain dormant within you. You can't put a cork over it and bottle it up. The Scriptures above quoted speak of His Spirit as "*dwelling*" in you — and, with many other Scriptures, as "CHRIST dwelling [in Spirit, not in actual Person] in you." But the living Christ is *alive, active*, not lifeless or dormant.

In John 7:37-39 Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit as "rivers of living water," *flowing into* us from Him, and then *flowing out of us*, in fulfilling God's Law. God's Spirit is God's LOVE — "the LOVE of God shed abroad in our hearts BY the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 5:5). God's Law is a SPIRITUAL Law (Rom. 7:14), and requires the *spiritual* LOVE we can receive only from God to fulfill — for LOVE is the fulfilling of the Law (Rom. 13:8, 10). Your own human (carnal) love *cannot* properly fulfill God's *spiritual* Law! And remember, God gives His Holy Spirit ONLY to "them that OBEY Him" (Acts 5:32).

Now a flowing RIVER flows down a riverbed — and God's "riverbed" down which the "living water" of His Spirit flows out from us is HIS LAW. In other words, God's Spirit flows out of us by fulfilling God's Law.

In the 15th chapter of John, Jesus makes this PLAIN! We are compared to the branches on a vine — say, a grapevine. As the sap flows *from* the vine *into* the branches, producing FRUIT, so God's Spirit flows *from* the living Christ into us, producing the "WORKS" of RIGHTEOUSNESS — that is, fulfilling God's LAW. But *this* kind of "works" is *not our* "works" — for that (God's

Spirit — God's LOVE) which PRODUCES this fruit of righteousness comes from GOD by HIS GRACE, freely given. THIS IS NOT OUR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS — it is *not* OUR "works" at all — it is GOD'S righteousness *given* by His grace, through His Spirit!

Now is *this* God-given righteousness *required* for salvation?

Notice this illustration of Jesus, in the 15th chapter of John.

Jesus says "I am the Vine, and my Father is the Husbandman" — that is, the owner and cultivator of the vineyard (John 15:1). Next verse: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit *He taketh away.*" Further, "He that abideth in me, and *I in him*" (Christ abiding, or dwelling IN you through the Holy Spirit) "the same bringeth forth much fruit . . . If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (verses 5, 6).

In other words, the fruit of God's righteousness MUST be produced in the Christian life. And what is "righteousness"? God says, "All thy Commandments are righteousness" (Psalm 119:172). This does not necessarily mean God will *cut you off* immediately, the first day or week or month you might let go by without producing active and positive fruit. There is, however, a limit somewhere along life's way where, unless you are definitely GROWING spiritually, that God's Spirit will no longer "dwell in you," and if you let that time come, you shall, like a dead grape branch, be ultimately cast into the final "gehenna fire."

But be sure of this: It is a DANGEROUS thing for a truly converted Christian to grow lukewarm and careless, and become a "passive" Christian. Perhaps most have temporary lapses in spiritual progress. But as soon as you "wake up" to such a lapse, *repent immediately* and seek God with your whole heart, for a CLOSER, more active spiritual walk with Him.

The Two Opposite ATTITUDES

Notice now this BASIC TRUTH.

There are just the two opposite philosophies of life — two OPPOSITE WAYS.

1) The WAY of human nature. This is the self-centered way of vanity, greed, envy; the way of getting, taking, accumulating; the way of competition and strife. It is the WAY of Satan — the way of sin.

2) The WAY of the divine nature, which may be implanted within by the Holy Spirit. This is the GOD-centered way of humility, exaltation of GOD, submissiveness to God; the way of outgoing concern for fellowman; the way of GIVING, sharing, serving, helping. It is the WAY of righteousness — GOD'S WAY.

Also, there are the TWO opposite and opposing ATTITUDES of mind.

You have a natural mind that is in tune with the devil's wavelength (Eph. 2:2). It picks up the very attitudes of Satan as expressed by selfishness, criticism, envy, unhappiness, etc., etc. Satan actually transmits to humanity that attitude of mind and heart which travels the way of sin as explained in 1) above. Of this natural mind, God says: "The carnal mind is enmity [hostile] against God; for it is not subject to the law of God . . ." (Rom. 8:7).

The opposite ATTITUDE is that of the repentant Christian — that of the divine nature implanted by the Holy Spirit. It travels THE WAY of 2) above. This is the *spiritual mind*. The *mind* of Christ — *in you!*

Now remember, there are TWO required CONDITIONS, which *you* must supply, before you receive the GIFT of God's Holy Spirit. Neither of these supply or earn salvation. But God will not GIVE His precious GIFT until we put down the hostile rebellion. These two conditions, as stated before, are *repentance* and *faith*.

What is repentance?

This comes to the very crux of the whole question.

Just What IS Repentance?

Repentance is a *change of mind* and ATTITUDE. It is a change *from* this carnal attitude of hostility toward God — of rebellion against God's Law, to the opposite attitude of love, submission, obedience, and worship of God, and reliance on Him. It is an "about-face" in attitude and *intent*, to THE WAY of God's righteousness.

Repentance means that you come to really SEE yourself

as you ARE — as GOD sees you — as a self-centered, hostile, shrivelled-up, rotten, vile, filthy, sinning hulk of rotting human flesh, unworthy to breathe the free air God gives you! It means to be so SORRY, not only for what you have *done*, but also for WHAT YOU ARE — that you so ABHOR yourself that you come, emotionally broken up, throwing yourself on God's mercy, asking His forgiveness, and His redemption! It means *wanting* to be made righteous.

To REPENT means a total *change* of ATTITUDE and HEART! A *continuously* repentant attitude! For God's Spirit will dwell *only* in such a mind!

FAITH means to accept the living Jesus Christ as personal Saviour, RELYING on Him, in full confidence that HIS SACRIFICE of His very life for YOU is altogether sufficient to pay the penalty of your transgressions; relying on Him completely to SAVE you from sinning, and to GIVE you righteousness and Eternal Life.

When you receive God's Holy Spirit, you have received the very *life* of God. But that does not make you, as yet, an *inheritor* of eternal life. You are *not yet* immortal.

You are then an HEIR of God — and a joint-heir with Christ. You are a BEGOTTEN child of God, not yet Spirit-BORN; that is, an *heir, not yet a possessor or inheritor*. Still mortal flesh and blood — not yet composed of spirit.

But as long as God's Holy Spirit *dwells* in you (active, as described above), you remain an heir of God, later to inherit and share with Christ ALL that the heavenly Father has!

Given a New Nature

Now we come to an ALL-important fact.

God's Holy Spirit within you is the presence of a NEW NATURE — a DIFFERENT nature — you are now a partaker of the DIVINE NATURE (II Peter 1:4). The nature that not only wants to BE good — but wants to DO righteousness.

But, *mark this well!* The reception of God's DIVINE NATURE within us DID NOT remove the old HUMAN NATURE, with its pulls and temptations. Nor *will* the HUMAN nature be completely REMOVED until the resurrection, and change into SPIRIT COMPOSITION — until you are no longer composed of matter, but of spirit.

War Between TWO Natures

Notice the apostle Paul's teaching to the Gentile converts of Galatia: "This I say, then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh *lusteth against* the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye *cannot* do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:16-17).

In Romans 8:14, it is written: "For as many as *are led* by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

I want you to UNDERSTAND this!

When one receives God's Spirit, it opens the MIND to spiritual comprehension — spiritual KNOWLEDGE. It shows him THE WAY to live — the way of GOD'S LAW. It opens the MIND to *understand* God's Word — and we must *live by* "every Word of God" — so said Jesus.

God's Holy Spirit never *possesses* one — never *forces* one. It enlightens one's mind — LEADS in the right way. But the individual must make the decision, and exercise WILL, to go that way.

Now to the Galatians, Paul wrote that *when* we "walk in the Spirit" — that is, are LED BY the Spirit, then "YE" — that is, YE CHRISTIANS — shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. The sense, here, is that IF and WHEN you — through lack of vigilance — relax and *neglect* to "walk in the Spirit," you may be caught off guard and yield to the PULL of human nature, still in you, and thus fulfill the lust of the flesh — commit a SIN!

In other words, IF, as long as, and WHEN, you WALK in the Spirit, you will NOT commit sin. But, Paul continues: "For the flesh *lusteth against* the Spirit" — and, as the RSV translates the rest of the sentence, "the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are OPPOSED to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would" (Gal. 5:16-17).

What you WOULD, what you really WANT to do, now that you have become *spiritual minded*, is to DO RIGHT — go the WAY of God's Law — be LED by God's Spirit. But is it *easy*?

Did Paul Sin?

This leads us directly to the FIGHT to be obedient the apostle Paul experienced.

After explaining that THE WAY of God's RIGHTEOUSNESS is THE WAY of God's Law, Paul was inspired to write: "What then shall we say? That the Law is sin?"

When God inspired that question, He knew that multiple thousands of professing clergy of today's deceived "Christianity" would be saying that God's Law is EVIL — it is BAD — it is a yoke of BONDAGE — that it is bad for us — that Jesus "nailed it to His cross" — that that "terrible Law" is "done away." So God inspired the ANSWER: "*By no means!*"

Read the question and answer again: "What then shall we say? That the Law is sin?" And GOD's answer through Paul: "BY NO MEANS!" (Romans 7:7 — RSV.) Continue, (*Moffatt* translation): "Why, had it not been for the Law, I would never have known what sin meant."

In other words, the Law DEFINES sin — the definition of SIN is, "Sin is the transgression of the Law" (I John 3:4). God does not allow MAN to decide *what* is sin — but God *compels* man to decide *whether* to sin. Man could never know *what* is sin, except by God's Law.

Continue: "Thus I would never have known what it is to covet, unless the Law had said, *You must not covet.*"

Paul says further, "Wherefore, the Law is HOLY, and the Commandment HOLY, and JUST, and GOOD . . . For we know that the Law is SPIRITUAL" (Rom. 7:12, 14).

Yes indeed — it is a SPIRITUAL Law — a Law of SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES of living — the HOLY, GOOD, SPIRITUAL WAY OF LIFE! Yet God says the CARNAL mind hates it — is hostile to it, not subject to it (Rom. 8:7). According to THAT inspired Word of GOD, a vast segment of the clergy of professing "Christianity" is CARNAL minded! Tragic, but true!

Now notice that it is NOT EASY to GO that way! It requires struggle! And WHY? Because human nature pulls you the other way!

Paul continues: "But then I am a creature of the flesh, in the thralldom of sin. I cannot understand my own actions. I do not act as I desire to act; on the contrary, I do what I detest" (verses 14-15, *Moffatt* translation).

Notice, Paul is not talking about how he formerly DID,

before conversion. He is speaking in the PRESENT TENSE. He is telling us of the struggle against sin that even the apostle Paul experienced.

Continue: "For in me (that is, in my flesh) no good dwells" (verse 18). That is, in human nature.

Psychiatrists today reason from the false approach that human nature is essentially good. God Almighty says it is NOT good, but essentially evil. The VANITY in human nature *wants* to be thought of as good — would like to BE good, but *not* to DO good. Thus it is deceptive, deceitful. It "kids itself" — to use modern slang. God says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9.) Yes, who can know — or UNDERSTAND it? Assuredly modern psychologists and psychiatrists don't!

So Paul says that in him — in his human flesh — his human nature — *no good* dwells. The ONLY good that can be in us is CHRIST in us, by His Holy Spirit.

What Was This OTHER Law?

So Paul continues: "...the wish is there, but not the power of doing what is right" (verse 18). Continue (*Authorized Version*), "For I delight in the Law of God."

Paul had *changed his mind* — REPENTED. He had been converted — received God's Holy Spirit, was now SPIRITUAL-MINDED. God's Law was in his mind — it was now "*the law of his mind*" — He *delighted* in it — said it was holy, just and good — a spiritual Law. In his now-converted spiritual mind, he *desired* to DO good.

So he said, "I delight in the Law of God after the inward man: but I see *another law* in my members, WARRING against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the *law of sin* which is in my members" (verses 22-23).

What was this "*another law in his members*"? It is also called "the law of sin which is in my members." It is simply the HUMAN NATURE that was still *in* him. It was *warring against* GOD'S LAW, which was now "the law of his mind." So Paul is describing his experience AFTER conversion — WHILE God's Holy Spirit was "dwelling in" him. And this *other law*, which was his human nature, was bringing him "into captivity" as its slave!

Paul Did EVIL?!!

As explained in Galatians 5:16-17, human nature — “the flesh” — lusted against God’s Spirit in him — against God’s Law in his mind, “so that ye cannot do the things that ye would,” as he wrote in Galatians 5:17.

It was thus with Peter. It was thus with Paul. And that is the way it is with YOU if God’s Spirit dwells in you.

Paul said, “. . . but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Rom. 7:19).

So what is Paul saying? He is saying that the PULL of human nature, warring against his converted spiritual mind, *did cause him to sin!*

Do not blame me, because THAT IS WRITTEN IN YOUR BIBLE! Let’s become Undeceived, and UNDERSTAND the TRUTH as God inspired it!

But *there is* a HAPPY ENDING to Paul’s experience, after all. So let’s make it PLAIN!

After Paul recounted his problem, no wonder he exclaimed, “O wretched man that I am! WHO shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Verse 24.) The *Moffatt* translation is more clear: “Miserable wretch that I am! WHO will rescue me from this body of death?” And his answer: “GOD WILL!”

The Happy Solution

Then follows the wonderful 8th chapter of Romans — the “Holy Spirit chapter.”

So now we come to the HAPPY SOLUTION!

And this is the solution for YOU, also! For you, too, have the pull of human nature to fight.

Plainly, Paul said that he *did*, at times, SIN — even in his converted state. He said, “. . . but the evil which I would not, that I do.” And he did do it *consciously* — *knowingly!* His mind, *for the moment*, did consent to it! He knowingly yielded! So knowingly that he wrote of it for you and me to read!

But he did *not* sin WILLFULLY! The evil he says he DID was “the evil which I *would not*” (Rom. 7:19).

His ATTITUDE — his overall INTENTION — was to do the

RIGHT of God's Law. He said, verses 21-22 of Romans 7, *Moffatt* translation: "So this is my experience of the Law. I desire to do what is right, but WRONG is all that I can manage. I cordially agree with GOD'S LAW, so far as my inner self is concerned."

He had NOT deliberately DESIRED to follow a life of evil — just the opposite! His overall DESIRE — his ATTITUDE — was to obey God's Law. Yet when the pull of human nature — *in a single incident* — overpowered him, he was aware of what he was doing in his mind — his mind therefore of necessity *did*, for the moment, consent and yield.

But THAT WAS NOT THE UNPARDONABLE SIN! It was NOT sinning WILLFULLY! And *it did NOT condemn him!* Nor does such an experience, if truly repented of, condemn YOU. Paul continues:

"There is therefore now NO CONDEMNATION to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). Here again, *Moffatt* renders it in more modern English: "Thus there is NO DOOM now for those who are in Christ Jesus; the law of the Spirit brings the LIFE which is IN Christ Jesus, and *that* law has set me free from the law of sin and death."

Many Wrest Paul's Writings

Let's make that PLAIN. Many would try to argue that this last sentence abolishes God's Law. They would argue that "the law of sin and death" is the Ten Commandments. It is JUST THE OPPOSITE!

As Peter wrote, some of Paul's writings are difficult to understand, "which they that are unlearned and unstable WREST, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction" (II Pet. 3:16).

Notice now! WHAT is this "law of sin and death" which he is *set free* from? NOT the Ten Commandments! It is, simply that "other law" of verse 23 (Rom. 7), "in my members"— the PULL of HUMAN NATURE into SIN. Later, same verse 23, Paul is brought "into captivity to the law of sin *which is in my members.*" This is the "law" that is "in his members." This is the "law" that is *warring against* the "law of my mind," which is the Law of GOD — "for I *delight in* the Law of God after the inward man" — as Paul made plain.

The "Law of his mind" was the Holy Spirit fulfilling God's Law — the Ten Commandment Law. The law "in his members" that enslaved him, called the "law of sin," was this "law of sin and death" spoken of in verse 2, 8th chapter of Romans. Thus God's Holy Spirit, in his mind, SET HIM FREE from the law of sin and death "in his members"—that is, from HUMAN NATURE — which enslaved him!

Notice, Paul had said (last verse in chapter 7), "So then with the mind I myself serve the Law of GOD; but with the flesh [human nature] the law of sin."

Some of Paul's writings do seem complicated. All this, made PLAIN, simply says HUMAN NATURE enslaved him — held him captive in sin — he was not able — of himself — to overcome it and resist sin. But God's Holy Spirit FREED him from being the slave of sin — *gave him POWER to resist and overcome sin* — gave him the POWER of DIVINE LOVE which comes from GOD — the love that FULFILLS God's Law.

Paul goes on, in this 8th chapter, to explain how the ATTITUDE of the natural, unconverted man — the carnal mind — is one of HOSTILITY against obedience to God and His Law (verse 7), but you are not "IN the flesh," but "IN the Spirit"—that is, "IN Christ," IF His Holy Spirit DWELLS in you (verse 9). This Spirit "dwelling" in you means an ATTITUDE OF MIND submissive to God and His Law — an attitude that DESIRES to GO *the way* of God's Law — THE WAY of love, of giving, sharing, serving, helping.

The FALSE Teachings

The people of the Western world are beset on every side by various absolutely FALSE teachings on this very subject.

There are those who say: It is IMPOSSIBLE for us to live righteously, so Christ lived a righteous life IN OUR STEAD, and, if you just believe, God IMPUTES Christ's righteousness to you. These people mean that YOU do not need to live righteously. Actually, THEY CONDONE SIN — their false argument means you are free to go on deliberately SINNING, but GOD PRETENDS you are righteous, by a sort of hocus-pocus of transferring *Jesus'* righteousness to you. Those are the "ungodly men" Jude warns against, "turning grace into license."

Others say that, since it is IMPOSSIBLE for us to keep God's Law, Jesus *did away with* the Law. So — if that be true, you are FREE to go on sinning.

There are also the false teachings about "a second work of grace," and "a second baptism of the Holy Spirit," and of what "the baptism *OF* the Holy Spirit" (as they incorrectly phrase it) MEANS. Then there are false teachings about "Justification, Sanctification and Christian Perfection."

Any one of these might require an entire booklet — or more — to correct, and make the TRUTH plain.

If the reader would like THE BIBLE EXPLANATION of the baptism by the Holy Spirit, write for our free booklet entitled *All About Water Baptism*. Also the reprint "How You Can Be Imbued With the Power of God."

Some people speak of having already BEEN "saved." And, indeed, certain New Testament passages, in the English translations, might lead one to assume that one's salvation is COMPLETE, and IN THE PAST, upon profession of Christ.

"Salvation" — Past, or Future?

The word "salvation"— that is, the English word — means, says Webster: "1. The saving of man from the spiritual consequences of sin . . . 2. Preservation from destruction, failure, or other evil."

In other words, "salvation" involves TWO things: 1) Saving man from the DEATH PENALTY he has incurred by sin; 2) Preservation of life — and, since man does not have eternal life, his life can be *preserved* ONLY by God's GIFT of Eternal life by a resurrection or conversion from mortality to immortality.

To explain further: One can SAVE a man from drowning — from falling off a high precipice to his death — that is, to PREVENT or *save from* a calamity or destruction or injury. But one also can SAVE fruit, vegetables, or other things from spoiling, *in the sense of* PRESERVING them, so that their existence is CONTINUED.

Actually, the Bible speaks of salvation in *three* ways — or as a process in *three* stages — if we wish to become theologically technical.

Jesus has already *saved us* (past tense) from the death penalty *by His blood*, paying the death penalty in our stead: ". . . according to His mercy He *saved us* . . . that *being justified* by His grace, we should be made heirs . . ." (Titus 3:5, 7). This passage speaks of having been saved from the penalty of past sins — JUSTIFIED — having received God's Holy Spirit, thus becoming HEIRS of God. Notice (verse 7 above), it is speaking of JUSTIFICATION of past sins, and of being in the state of an HEIR — not an INHERITOR as yet.

Then, in II Corinthians 2:15, RSV, it speaks of those that "*are being saved*" — PRESENT tense. The verb here should be translated, as in the RSV, "are being saved," and not "are saved," as in the *King James* version. The *Moffatt*, and other translations render this as "are being saved."

To make it plain, notice the whole sense of the passage: "For we are unto God a sweet savour [fragrance] of Christ, in them that are saved [being saved], and in them that perish." We Christians are like sweet perfume or fragrance to certain others. If to those that are (already — past tense) saved, then also to those who are, already (past tense) perished. Now those already perished are not smelling anything. This is speaking of LIVING people. If those that "perish" are merely ON THE WAY toward perishing — but not yet perished — then, also those "saved" are BEING saved — on the way to the final salvation.

Then MANY, MANY Scriptures speak of the salvation to *come* — of those who "shall be" (future) saved. Most passages referring to the TIME of salvation refer to it as taking place at Christ's coming — as Revelation 12:10 and elsewhere.

In spiritual salvation, the blood of Christ — the death of Christ — paid the penalty we have incurred in our stead. And it SAVES us from this destruction (which is the second death) — that is, PREVENTS us from having to pay it — if and when we REPENT, and accept Jesus as personal Saviour in faith believing (read Romans 5:8-10).

But, God's gift of eternal LIFE comes to us through Christ's LIFE, (verse 10) through His resurrection and LIFE — not by His death. His death paid our penalty of past sins IN OUR STEAD.

These sins had cut us off from contact with God. When Jesus' sacrifice is accepted by repentance and faith, we are no longer cut off from God, but reconciled to Him — the connection or contact established, so that, through His Son's LIFE, He now can GIVE us His Holy Spirit, and, at Christ's coming and time of resurrection, ETERNAL LIFE. This, finally *preserves* our life for eternity.

That is why God's Word says, "he that shall endure unto the end *shall be saved*" (Matt. 24:13 and elsewhere).

One is *already saved* FROM the DEATH penalty — eternal punishment — for SINS THAT ARE PAST, upon repentance and faith in Christ — *as long as* he does not sin again! And *he will!* BUT, as explained in this booklet, if and when he slips, and sins again, then, *upon repentance*, he is *again* forgiven. Yes, again, *and again, and again!* That is, as long as his ATTITUDE of heart is submissive to God, he has faith in Christ, and God's Spirit continues to dwell in him.

So we have: 1) "Justification," which is forgiveness of sins that are past (Romans 3:24-25) — because *Jesus* paid our penalty, thus justifying — or vindicating — us. Then, 2) "*sanctification*" (Greek, *hagiasmos*), meaning, separation; a *setting apart* for holy use or purpose. This is a continual process — once so *set apart* — and *leads to* ultimate salvation, which salvation is the change from mortal to immortal — from material composition to spiritual — from human to divine. Thus: "God hath . . . chosen you to salvation *through* sanctification of the Spirit . . ." (II Thes. 2:13); and "Elect . . . *through* sanctification of the Spirit, UNTO obedience . . ." (I Pet. 1:2). And, finally, 3) SALVATION by RESURRECTION — ETERNAL LIFE.

The Crux of the Truth

Then Paul comes to the crux of the whole TRUTH, so far as the Christian LIFE is concerned. It is in the 14th verse, this 8th chapter of Romans:

"For as many *as are led* by the Spirit of God, *they* are the sons of God."

So we come to *this*:

God's Spirit dwelling in you is God's own divine LOVE,

which *can* fulfill God's Law. Thus what GOD has *given* you by grace *may* actually *make you righteous!* That means, put GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS actually within you!

NOTICE, I said God's Spirit in you CAN! It MAY put His righteousness within you!

BUT — and *here is the all-important point* — God's Spirit in you will not *force* you to live righteously. God's Holy Spirit will not POSSESS you — as a demon would if allowed to enter. You remain a free moral agent.

God has given you the SPIRITUAL EQUIPMENT to live His Way! His Spirit will OPEN YOUR MIND to SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING. God's WAY is to *live by every Word of God* — that is, to LIVE BY the whole teachings of the Bible. The carnal mind cannot UNDERSTAND the spiritual things of God. The Holy Spirit imparts to you a SPIRITUAL MIND which *can* comprehend this spiritual knowledge as you study your Bible.

THAT IS, IT SHOWS YOU *THE WAY*.

But YOU must decide, and you must exert WILL, to *follow that Way*. "Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but *the doers* of the law shall be justified" (Rom. 2:13). You *must decide* whether to WALK down that road — *to be led by* the Spirit of God — or *to be led by* the PULLS of your human nature.

A Spiritual Baby

A newly begotten child of God is a spiritual BABE in Christ. And human physical babies fall down several times before they learn to walk! But they do not become discouraged, give up, or quit! Spiritual babies, too, fall down — perhaps many times — in a number of INCIDENTS of sin — learning to WALK with Christ down GOD'S ROADWAY.

But that does not need to move them *off* that way! If they are "walking with Christ," HE is there (in Spirit) to pick them up, and help them learn to walk better!

So UNDERSTAND! God gives you the *spiritual equipment* to go HIS WAY. The Holy Spirit imparts power to UNDERSTAND *what is* God's Way, revealed in the Bible. It thus *leads* — but never *pulls*, pushes, shoves, or forces! God's Spirit gives you the spiritual LOVE — God's own LOVE — which *only* may fulfill His

Law. His Spirit imparts to you CHRIST'S OWN FAITH, to make possible obeying His Law. It gives you spiritual POWER!

That's a lot of spiritual EQUIPMENT! A lot of HELP!

But it is still UP TO YOU what you *do* with it! Jesus said that road *is not easy*. Human nature, the world and its associations, and the invisible forces of Satan, continue *pulling* you the other way. Yes, they PULL! And God's Spirit dwelling in you does *not* pull! YOU must exert your WILL and DETERMINATION to *follow* God's Spirit leading you to see and understand God's way. You have the spiritual equipment to go that way. Yet this *other law* — the law of human nature — the law of "sin and death" — will tug at you, and PULL in the carnal direction.

And you are a spiritual BABY! So, you do fall down a number of times — yet you are falling while still ON CHRIST'S ROAD, walking with Him. As long as you keep His Goal before your eyes — as long as you continue in the spiritual ATTITUDE — as long as you DESIRE to go God's Way — as long as you keep trying, and determined, YOU ARE STILL ON THAT ROAD!

You are NOT CONDEMNED!

The SELF in the converted Christian is still there — but, as Paul spoke of it, it must be CRUCIFIED! A crucified man may be still alive, but nailed up to a stake so he can't get down even though he wants to. The Christian must nail up, so to speak, this old human nature, so that it is NOT ALLOWED to get active and pull him down in the wrong direction.

So Paul said, to the Galatians, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20).

It Takes STRIVING!

Notice what God says about the Christian life.

It is not EASY to overcome sin. You simply DON'T succeed in every encounter — in every incident!

Jesus said, "STRIVE to enter in at the strait gate . . ." (Luke 13:24). The Greek word which Jesus spoke for "*strive*" means "to strive, to agonize." It means a hard STRUGGLE. A "strait" gate is a very narrow one — difficult to squeeze through. "For," continued Jesus (Matthew 7:13-14), "WIDE is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and MANY

there be which go in thereat: because *strait* is the gate, and *narrow* is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Paul, to the Colossians, spoke of his struggle to overcome, saying: "... I also labor, STRIVING according to His working, which worketh in me mightily" (Col. 1:29).

Paul knew that the Christian has a fierce BATTLE with his own nature, the world, and the powers of Satan, when he said, "Ye have not yet *resisted unto blood*, STRIVING against sin" (Heb. 12:4).

Paul also showed how we must have on a mighty SPIRITUAL ARMOUR to win this battle. He said, "Finally, my brethren, BE STRONG in the Lord, and in the POWER of His might. Put on the WHOLE ARMOUR of GOD, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness [WICKED SPIRITS] in high places" (Eph. 6:10-12). Again, in the more modern English of *Moffatt*, "... but with the angelic [demoniacal] Rulers, the angelic Authorities, the potentates of the dark present, the *spirit forces of evil* in the heavenly sphere."

The Special Help You Need

BUT — there's more to it than that! Each time you stumble and fall down — in *an incident* of sin — you simply failed to fully USE this spiritual equipment God had given you. You *could have* prevented it — you MUST learn to prevent these stumblings along the way. You MUST *overcome* these forces — your human nature, the world, and the devil — which have pulled you down.

The ANSWER?

The apostle Paul gave it. After picturing these stumblings, he cried out, "O wretched man that I am, WHO shall deliver me from this body of death?" And he answered, GOD WILL!

At each temptation to stumble, you need to cry out to GOD for SPECIAL HELP — for EXTRA POWER!

Yet if you wait until the temptation comes, you may then, for the moment, be too weak to call out for Christ to hold you

up. Now JESUS set the example! And He never stumbled *once!* He is the *only One* who never did! And WHY? Because He is the *only One* who kept Himself *constantly* SO CLOSE TO GOD — in continual PRAYER — keeping His mind so *continually* and *steadfastly* on God — maintaining, constantly, such close *companionship* and *fellowship* with God that when each temptation came He was spiritually *strong enough* to put the temptation out of His mind *instantly!*

He never harbored a temptation. He was tempted in all points, just as you and I are! Repeatedly! Satan worked harder in tempting Him than he ever did on any other human! How did He put *out* of mind the temptations? By having PUT IN His mind the spiritual power of God's Holy Spirit!

Now you and I can have — must have to succeed — this same FELLOWSHIP with God, and also with the living Christ (I John 1:3, 7).

But if, when the temptation comes, you find yourself NOT so filled with God's power, that the temptation tries you, you STILL can cry out, *at the instant*, for HELP!

Jesus Christ is your High Priest. Read Hebrews 4:16. Go boldly to Him on the Throne of Grace for that HELP in time of need!

Do Real Christians Ever Sin?

Now we approach our final answer.

Suppose the prominent church member, mentioned in the beginning of this booklet, was actually a truly converted man, and that he actually did commit the alleged adultery. Could he *still* be a Christian? If GOD had been previously using him, could God still have used him, after the sin of adultery — if he had not been murdered?

I was mentioning this hypothetical instance to a man who is a begotten son of God. His instant, rather emphatic ejaculation was that *definitely* he never *could have been* a truly converted man of God, IF he committed adultery.

And I am led to believe perhaps MOST people would think the same way.

BUT YOU WOULD BE WRONG!

Yes, Even Ministers CAN Sin!

We need to UNDERSTAND!

Not only could a prominent churchman, under temptation, slip and commit a sin. But even Jesus Christ was *tempted* — probably more strongly than any other human. He, of course, never let the temptation remain in His mind — it never *conceived* or *gave birth* to sin.

And we need to remember — even a minister of Jesus Christ — a true one whom the living Christ USES — is JUST AS HUMAN AS YOU ARE!

First, too many people look on a minister as a holy, superhuman, saintly, super-righteous sort of person who is surely not HUMAN. They seem to think a minister is not like other humans — that he is automatically ABOVE SIN! This can get to be a sort of WORSHIP, of making your minister "*another god* BEFORE the Almighty God." That can become IDOLATRY!

A minister has the same human nature YOU have — and I have shown you the apostle Paul had it, too! Surely NO minister today is any more righteous than was PAUL — and he had a mighty BATTLE striving against sin!

And if we battle against EVIL SPIRITS in HIGH PLACES — Satan and demons of HIGH RANK, and GREAT POWER — just consider *how much more* the forces of Satan would try to overthrow a true minister of the living Christ!

God's ministers probably have a far tougher STRUGGLE against sin than YOU do! They *NEED* your *prayers*!

Now as I said in the beginning, I did not know this churchman who was murdered. It is not for me to judge whether he was sincere, whether actually a converted man.

I do not know whether he actually committed the alleged adultery.

But I do want to make one thing PLAIN.

IF he *were* a converted man, with God's Holy Spirit dwelling in him — with an abiding overall ATTITUDE of delighting in God's Law, as did Paul, of obedience to GOD — and if he actually *did* slip, and under a temptation you and I may not understand, yield to this INCIDENT of adultery — then IF he

truly repented of it, as soon as he came back to his right senses, God WOULD HAVE FORGIVEN!

Assuredly it WAS possible that he could have *continued* as a real Christian. Jesus DIED to forgive and BLOT OUT sins REPENTED OF!

Most assuredly *no Christian* SHOULD commit sin!

And most assuredly *no one* teaches more emphatically than do the editors of *The PLAIN TRUTH* that Christians MUST KEEP GOD'S COMMANDMENTS! No one can say that we condone sin! NEVER!!!

Now UNDERSTAND!

The apostle John had been three-and-a-half years *with* Jesus. He wrote under Jesus' inspiration. He said:

"This then is the Message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you . . ." (I John 1:5). This is the inspired Message *direct from Christ!* Continue:

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth" (verse 6). The "*we*" here refers to real Christians. In verse 19 of chapter 2 he speaks of NON-Christians: "*They* went out from *us*, but *they* were not of *us*." His language is plain.

If WE profess to be Christians — if we SAY we have fellowship "with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (verse 3) — yet if we *are living* in darkness — if our lives are going the way of SIN — we are liars. He is not talking here of one who, under temptation, commits *an act* of sin, and then repents. He is talking directly of those followers of the FALSE PROPHETS who teach that GOD'S LAW is DONE AWAY. If you say you are a Christian because you BELIEVE IN CHRIST, or worship Christ — yet DO NOT KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS, you WALK in "darkness." You then do NOT have any fellowship with Christ, and if you claim to be a Christian, you are a LIAR! (I John 2:4.)

Difference Between an Act and an Attitude

He is not talking about AN ACT of sin, repented of — but about *an attitude* and *a life* of continuously *living in sin!*

We must, as a continuous WAY OF LIFE, "walk in the light"

— that is, THE WAY of obeying God's Commandments. THEN "we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son *cleanseth us* from all sin" (verse 7). The word "cleanseth" here is from the original Greek word "katharizo" which is in the Greek *present* tense which denotes action or repeated in present time. It does not say, the blood of Christ "*did cleanse us*, when we were first converted." But, rather, does NOW cleanse us who were, in the past, converted.

The following verses make this meaning clear. Notice verse 8:

"If WE" (who are already Christians) "say that *we* have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

Here again, notice the tenses. John does not say, "If we Christians say we *did not sin*, before we were forgiven and converted." He is *not* talking about past sins, committed before repentance and conversion. THOSE sins God has forgiven in the past and no longer remembers. He is speaking here of the present. "If we, NOW, say that we NOW have no sin."

Now continue, "If WE confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to CLEANSE US from all unrighteousness" (verse 9). This is speaking of any sins a Christian may commit, *after he has been converted*. IF we confess, and REPENT, Jesus, our High Priest, alive in heaven, will FORGIVE, and, more, CLEANSE US of *all* unrighteousness.

What is "righteousness"? Psalm 119:172 — keeping ALL God's Commandments. Unrighteousness is transgressing one or more of God's Commandments. If WE, who are already Christians, confess and REPENT of any sin we might, unhappily, commit (though we certainly SHOULD NOT SIN!!), the living Christ not only will forgive, but will CLEANSE US from doing it anymore!

Next verse: "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us" (verse 10). In other words, "If WE CHRISTIANS say we CHRISTIANS have not sinned."

The next verse continues right on, though it is in chapter 2.

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not" (chapter 2, verse 1). Or, "I write this to you CHRISTIANS, that you who are already Christians *will not sin*." Then he continues, "And IF any man sin, WE — [we Christians] — have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous:

and He is the propitiation for OUR sins" (verses 1-2). And he continues, same verse, to show he is NOT talking about forgiving sins of people "in the world" repenting and just BEING converted: "and not for *ours only*, but *also* for the sins of the whole world."

Plainly that says that Christ is the propitiation NOT ONLY for the sins of the whole world — the UNconverted — BUT, ALSO, for OURS — speaking of converted Christians.

In the very next verse John shows how WE Christians *know* that we know HIM — "IF WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS." That is, if that is OUR WAY of life — OUR ATTITUDE — OUR DESIRE — our INTENTION. We may stumble and fall down once in a while, along THAT WAY. We are "BABES IN CHRIST" and babies fall down sometimes, learning to WALK. But our "WALK" is THE WAY of keeping God's Commandments!

In verse 4, he speaks of the FALSE Christians. "He that saith 'I know Him,' and keepeth not His Commandments, IS A LIAR, and the truth is not in him." That is, the one who never professes to keep God's Commandments, yet professes he is "saved by grace."

The FINAL CONCLUSION

Now we are ready to MAKE PLAIN what *IS* the "unpardonable sin" — that sin that can never be forgiven, in this world or the next!

SALVATION means being BORN into GOD'S KINGDOM, changed from a flesh-and-blood mortal HUMAN, to a Spirit-composed, life-inherent, immortal son of God the Father — the Father of the divine Family. *That* change will come at *the time* of Christ's return. This salvation depends upon God's Holy Spirit *dwelling in* one at the END of the ROAD — end of your life — or, as Paul characterized it, the end of the race.

SIN is the transgression of GOD'S LAW. We naturally have a carnal mind, hostile to God's Law, resentful of authority over it. All have sinned!

When one REPENTS of sin and sinning — comes to a CHANGE of mind and attitude in regard to sin, and BELIEVES in Jesus Christ as His Saviour not only from past sins, but from SINNING — God has PROMISED His Holy Spirit. This GIFT from God, of

the presence within of His own immortal life, effects a CHANGE in the MIND. It becomes spiritual-minded — comes to the ATTITUDE of desiring to GO THE WAY of God's Law — of loving God, being submissive to God's authority, WANTING God's righteousness. No longer SELF-centered, but GOD-centered.

He thus starts his WALK down that road, to the end of his life. It is the WAY of God's Commandments, as a WAY of LIFE. At the end of that road is ETERNAL LIFE — his LIFE GOAL, which he now desires *above all else!*

God's Spirit dwelling in him is the divine LOVE of God which fulfills God's spiritual Law. Through God's Spirit, God by grace has GIVEN him the spiritual EQUIPMENT *to walk that Way*. It is a WAY of overcoming, and of GROWING in character — in the knowledge of Christ and of God's WAY. God's Spirit dwells in one *actively*, flowing into him from God, flowing on out in LOVE to God, and LOVE to neighbor.

BUT, as he WALKS this WAY of life, HE IS A "BABE IN CHRIST," actually *learning* to walk spiritually, just as a human baby must *learn to walk* physically. He must TRY not to fall, yet he is bound to fall down a few times along the road, learning to walk spiritually.

If, through former HABIT, or being overcome by temptation of the PULL of the flesh — of his human nature — or other cause, he encounters an INCIDENT of committing a sin, for which he is afterward truly sorry — and for which he REPENTS — all the while his INNER Spirit-begotten MIND still in the ATTITUDE of DESIRING to continue on GOD'S WAY, then he has an advocate with the Father — Jesus Christ our High Priest — to FORGIVE that sin.

THAT IS *NOT* AN UNPARDONABLE SIN!

Even though, in that incident, under temptation or neglect of prayer and Bible study, he does yield KNOWINGLY, his mind, for the time being, ASSENTING to the deed. This is doing it, for the moment, WILLINGLY, but it is *NOT willful sin*.

The determining factor is this: As long as God's Spirit is DWELLING IN him, he is in contact with God, and still his ATTITUDE is right. And as long as God's Spirit does dwell in him, he IS ON THE ROAD TO ETERNAL LIFE. He may, on occasion, stumble

and fall down. But he continues, so far as his overall ATTITUDE is concerned, on this ROAD to LIFE.

Now I have shown that God *will forgive* such an *incident* of sin in a Spirit-begotten Christian.

You may ask, "But would God forgive if he ever sins AGAIN?" As long as his INTENTION — his overall ATTITUDE and desire — *and effort* — is to WALK WITH GOD, going GOD'S WAY, God will forgive. Jesus said we must forgive, not just once, not twice, or seven times, but seventy TIMES seven. Is God LESS forgiving than He expects us to be?

WILLFUL Sinning

WHEN one receives the Holy Spirit by God's grace, this Spirit dwelling in him is tentative and conditional SALVATION. But IF one *again* changes his mind — changes his LIFE'S GOAL — takes his eyes completely off the Goal of God's Kingdom, and fixes them PURPOSELY on going back to THE WAY of worldliness and sin — IF he changes his WAY of life back to the CARNAL WAY of the world, *leaving* the ROAD he was traveling with CHRIST — THEN he has set his mind on determined, premeditated, deliberate WILLFUL SIN!

IF he decides he *no longer WANTS* to go GOD'S WAY, deliberately and intentionally *changes* his OVERALL ATTITUDE, and desires, and CHOOSES the world and its ways — deliberately chooses a life of rebellion, comes to have contempt and disregard for God's Law, then that man either *has done* or *is in danger of doing* despite to God's Holy Spirit which a merciful and loving God had GIVEN by grace!

SUCH A MAN is surely in grave DANGER of BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT!

This is not a mere stumbling while ON THE WAY — on GOD'S WAY — the WAY of His LAW fulfilled by His HOLY SPIRIT — the way to Eternal Life. This is not an *incident* of sin. A man may stumble over an INCIDENT of sin *again and again*, while WALKING the WAY of God, with God's Spirit still dwelling IN him. Always he will repent — because his ATTITUDE is, simply, that he DESIRES, more than anything in life, to SUCCEED along this WAY he has chosen — to OVERCOME, to GROW spiritually, to receive ETERNAL LIFE. He may find the road hard, difficult, beset with

temptations and spiritual pitfalls. He will most certainly suffer persecution. But his overall WILLFUL purpose, ATTITUDE and life-GOAL is to be submissive to God, to RELY on God, to be OBEDIENT to God, to LIVE for God, and to enter the Kingdom of God.

What most people do not understand is the *difference* between an *incident* of a sin committed — even though there be REPEATED such incidents of stumbling, always repented of — and one's overall ATTITUDE, or desired, deliberate, willful, and fixed PURPOSE!

The one who changes that overall ATTITUDE from one of submissive yielding to God to one of hostile rebellion — the one who changes his life's GOAL from wanting God's RIGHTEOUSNESS, and ETERNAL LIFE, to wanting SELF-centeredness and willfully going the WORLD'S WAY, is in an altogether different category than the one whose GOAL is the Kingdom of God, but who stumbles in an *incident* of sin — or even many such incidents.

TWO Ways Into Unpardonable Sin

I want to be even more specific. I want every reader to UNDERSTAND. And I feel very few do fully understand this question.

There are at least TWO ways in which a Spirit-begotten Christian may LOSE the gift of God's Holy Spirit.

1) By deliberate choice. This may come from wrong reasoning; from wrong desire thought out to a final fixed, permanent decision as to his WAY OF LIFE; or, from allowing *resentment* in his heart toward either God or some person who may have wronged him. To allow resentment to embitter him, until he comes to change his whole life course, turning from God.

I cannot put too much emphasis on guarding against harboring resentment. It is spiritual POISON — *deadly* spiritual poison. If ever you begin to feel resentment against some injustice, go PRAY, asking God to remove it QUICKLY. Do not let it well up inside you — never harbor it. If you do, you will become as "hooked" with it as a dope addict becomes "hooked" with heroin! It is *that serious!*

God warns you, "Follow PEACE with all men, and holiness,

without which no man shall see the Lord: looking *diligently* lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any *root of bitterness* springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled" (Heb. 12:14-15). Your bitterness may not harm the other fellow — but it may destroy YOU!

2) The converted Christian can *lose* the presence of God's Spirit by CONTINUED NEGLECT. Neglect of prayer, neglect of Bible study, neglect of spiritual fellowship with God's people. Or, by continuing too close a friendship with unconverted people — letting participation with them in material interests, pleasures, sports, entertainments, cause NEGLECT of spiritual interests. Don't misunderstand. A certain amount of diversion can be healthy. And you cannot avoid all contact with unconverted people. But never let it DOMINATE in your interest and heart.

To the Colossians, God says through Paul: "Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1). That is, instead of *seeking* an interest in television shows, or popular materialistic interests, actively *seek* more knowledge of Christ — more of the UNDERSTANDING that comes from GOD, in the Bible. Make this your MAIN interest. Never let occasional diversion compete with it as your overall interest.

The passage continues: "Set your *affection* on things above, not on things on the earth" (verse 2). Make the SPIRITUAL things your dominant all-absorbing BIG interest — until you LOVE the receiving of new spiritual knowledge, and set your *affection* on it. Digging out new spiritual TRUTH in the Bible is *the most exciting interest* there can be in life. It's not dry, dull, uninteresting, boring. It's exciting, thrilling — and also profitable and uplifting!

NOT the World's Way

Remember it is a WAY OF LIFE. It is not the way the world is living. It is a different ATTITUDE altogether. Jesus said we must *live by* every Word of God — that is, the WHOLE BIBLE! Since the world lives a different way — travels a different ROAD, if you get interested in, absorbed in, and walking down *that* road, you certainly will no longer be walking with the *living*

Christ down the spiritual road, with God's LIFE — His Spirit — *dwelling* in you!

Remember, Jesus tells us it is "he that shall endure unto the END, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13). He means the END of this Spirit-LED road, which every Christian must travel — if LED BY the Holy Spirit. That is LIFE'S road. So it means the remainder of your life.

You cannot travel down two different roads, leading in opposite directions, at the same time. Once you have *started* traveling with the *living* Christ on God's road that leads to eternal life, if you allow materialistic interests to *dominate*, they *may* soon lure you back on the carnal road of this world.

And then what?

If you leave THE WAY that God's Spirit is leading, then God's Spirit may leave you — no longer dwelling in you! You will commit sins, but you will not be sorry — and you will probably not repent!

So UNDERSTAND! Salvation is *from sinning!* It comes as God's GIFT — by grace.

"Works" do not earn or produce it. "Works" determine the degree of "reward," or office, or glory, in God's Kingdom, *IF* you are born into that Kingdom, by grace!

To be "saved"— to inherit eternal life in God's Kingdom — you must still be traveling THAT WAY at the end of your life! Stumbling — falling down — *on* that road, repented of, DOES NOT PUT YOU OFF THAT ROAD! But to deliberately *change roads*, to willfully go back on the world's road, or to let the false glamor and glitter of the world's road begin to dominate your life, may bring you to a place where you are unable to REPENT and get back on GOD'S WAY. You may never WANT to get back on the *right* road, traveling with the living CHRIST!

Important!

Yet I am persuaded that anyone who does seriously REPENT, and earnestly SEEK Jesus Christ, may find Him, and forgiveness, and get back on the right road.

But *don't take chances!*

Remember Esau. He "found no place of repentance, though

he sought it with tears" (Heb. 12:17). It was *too late!* The Birthright had already been *confirmed* to Jacob! And Judas found it was **TOO LATE** to move time back and prevent betraying the very **CHRIST** — after Jesus was crucified! Judas "repented himself,"— but it was **TOO LATE**. He "went out and hanged himself."

DON'T take chances on it being **TOO LATE** for **YOU!**

Probably it is **NOT** "too late" yet! *Don't delay* repenting and getting back to Christ!

How About NON-Christians?

So far, we have treated only with the case of converted Christians, who have actually received the precious **GIFT** of God's Holy Spirit.

But can a **NON-Christian** commit an **unforgivable sin**?

Let me say, first, **MANY** have *supposed* they had been converted, but who, actually, **NEVER WERE!**

I knew a man who thought he had repented, and was baptized. Others thought he had been really converted — that is, had received God's Holy Spirit. His *attitude* seemed changed. He now had the same *attitude* toward *the world* in general that spirit-minded people do. He certainly could see what was wrong with this world. He was disgusted with it. He was accepted among spirit-minded people as one of them.

But very soon he turned the other way. His Christian friends wondered if he had committed the unpardonable sin. Then it came to mind, they didn't remember ever hearing him expressing any disgust with his own **SELF**. The **WORLD** was wrong — but was *he*? Had he, after all, ever come to any real **REPENTANCE** — or only a little of the *sorrow* that people of the world experience?

HAD he, after all, received the Holy Spirit? Were there any **FRUITS** of it? Very doubtful. He seemed still to be **SELF-centered**, more concerned with **SELF** than going **God's way**.

Such a person might have had no more than a **FALSE** "conversion," like multiple **MILLIONS** in the world today. If so, he certainly had **NOT** committed an unforgivable sin!

IF such a one **DOES** come to real repentance, and real

heartrending DESIRE to be God's son, to go GOD'S way henceforth, and to find salvation, HE CAN!

Those deceived with the popular FALSE "salvation" of this world's "Christianity" *are not necessarily yet CONDEMNED!*

Blaspheming the Holy Spirit

Now notice what Jesus said about blaspheming the Holy Spirit. There had been brought to him a demon-possessed, blind and dumb man. Jesus healed him. The man then saw and spoke. The people were amazed! But the Pharisees (Matt. 12:24) and the scribes which had come up to Galilee from Jerusalem (Mark 3:22) accused Jesus of being Satan-possessed, and casting out demons by Beelzebub (Satan).

These hypocritical scribes and Pharisees *knew* their accusation was a lie! Just before this, they had been holding a council, plotting to discredit — and to MURDER — Jesus! (Matt. 12:14.) They accused Jesus falsely, attempting to discredit Him in the eyes of the people.

The *modern* "Pharisees" of this world's organized but deceived "Christianity" — resisting *the same true Gospel* of the Kingdom of God, now being heard by the MILLIONS worldwide today through *this* Work of God, use the same tactics against us! They falsely accuse us of being what they are — false prophets. They deliberately misrepresent what we teach. They falsely say we teach what we do not — and that we do not teach what we do!

Jesus had been casting out demons. The crowd was awed! Many were beginning to believe! These religious leaders said to the crowds, "He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of demons casteth out demons" (Mark 3:22).

To these scribes and Pharisees — and to the crowds — Jesus replied:

"Verily I say unto you, all sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: *BUT* he that *shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit* hath never forgiveness, but IS IN DANGER OF eternal damnation" (Mark 3:28-29).

Now what does "*blaspheme*" mean?

The Greek word, in which it was originally written, means "*intentional* indignity offered to God or sacred things."

With these scribes and Pharisees, it was *intentional*. And they **KNEW** it was false. To say a thing like this in ignorance of the true facts, or impulsively in emotional anger without thinking, would be different. But these religious leaders *knew* their accusation was false! Their blasphemy was *deliberate*, premeditated, intentional. They had just been counselling together on **HOW** to discredit Him, and to murder Him.

So, this unforgivable sin is one committed deliberately, *knowing* they are wrong, after thinking it over, and doing it intentionally, *willfully*. Jesus said they were **IN DANGER OF** damnation in gehenna fire, the final, second death!

And *this* sin was committed by *unconverted* men!

No ordinary sin, even by a Christian, is unforgivable. Jesus said plainly that **ALL** sins, and blasphemies — against even **GOD** — even against Jesus Christ — will be forgiven on repentance. It is **ONLY** premeditated, thought-out, planned, deliberate, intentional, willful indignity, insult, false accusation against God's **HOLY SPIRIT** that is unforgivable.

Sinning WILLFULLY

Now, finally notice the two passages in the book of Hebrews, speaking of sinning **WILLFULLY**, and being **IMPOSSIBLE** to repent.

These, actually, have already been explained at great length in this booklet. So now we come to these Scriptural passages themselves.

Notice: "For if we sin **WILLFULLY** after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, 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, where-with he was sanctified, *an unholy thing*, and **HATH DONE** **DESPITE UNTO THE SPIRIT** of grace?" (Hebrews 10:26-29.)

I have fully explained in this booklet the meaning of WILLFUL sinning. This passage refers only to those who have become truly converted — received God's Holy Spirit. The "WE" refers to converted Christians. None can, in fact, come to the real "KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH," until they have received the Holy Spirit to open their minds to that spiritual TRUTH (I Cor. 2:9-11, 14).

But notice, this sinning WILLFULLY is connected with doing "despite to the SPIRIT of grace" — certainly dangerously close to blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

However, as explained above, most sins committed by begotten children of God are NOT in this category!

The other passage is this:

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift" — the Holy Spirit — "and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, 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" (Heb. 6:4-6).

Actually, if you understand one phrase here, it is self-explanatory. That is this: "For it is IMPOSSIBLE . . . IF they shall *fall away*, TO RENEW THEM AGAIN UNTO REPENTANCE."

Now there may be *degrees* toward "falling away." How shall we know how far is here meant? By the next words: whenever it becomes IMPOSSIBLE to renew one to repentance — well, he has "fallen away" — completely!

Remember, God *grants* repentance (Acts 11:18; 5:31). Yet of course God never *forces* repentance on one. When one has come to the place where he WON'T — can't — has totally, completely, lost all desire to repent — is UNABLE to repent — he has "fallen away."

And of course this is NOT speaking of UNCONVERTED people — those who never had been converted — but only those who had been.

The TEST is this: IF and WHEN one really does DESIRE to repent — *does* feel completely disgusted and abhorrent of himself — does DESIRE to repent and get back into God's grace — *HE CAN!*

What about the "backslider" — as some phrase it? If he at any time becomes *willing* to repent — comes to DESIRE to repent and return to God's WAY, the gracious, merciful, all-loving GOD *will* forgive — and *will grant* full repentance.

God inspired James to close his book with this important admonition:

"My brothers, if anyone of *you* goes astray from the truth and someone brings him back, understand that he who brings a sinner back from the error of his way saves the man's soul from death and hides a host of his own sins" (James 5:19-20 — *Moffatt* translation).

That's the final answer. If he's committed the unpardonable sin, he won't want to. If he *wants* to — if he does REPENT, and WANTS the contact reestablished with God — HE CAN!

And how about one never yet truly converted — or one who *thought* he was, but had only a false "conversion" and backslid? Well, *whenever* he is willing to really REPENT, and WANTS to find Christ — HE CAN — if he just WILL!

HOW WONDERFUL are the ways of GOD!

Personal Counsel

If you are one who really wants to repent and obey God — then here is GOOD NEWS! The Worldwide Church of God has dedicated, consecrated, converted, fully instructed and trained, ORDAINED MINISTERS in all parts of the United States and many other parts of the world — available to call on you, visit in your home, answer your questions, and explain the Bible to you. Of course, none of them will ever call on you, *unless* you of your own free will request it.

But, if you of your own volition want to know more about the Bible, repentance, and the Christian life — why not request a personal visit (details are on page 43). We will have one of God's own ministers call on you. □

If You'd Like to Know More

Many hundreds have written asking if we have representatives in their local areas to counsel with them personally and to answer their questions.

The answer is yes, we do.

The Worldwide Church of God stations personal representatives (most are ordained ministers) in the United States and many other areas of the world. These local ministers will visit you, if invited, directly in your own home.

So if you have spiritual matters to discuss or questions to ask about biblical topics such as marriage, family, repentance, baptism, etc., please feel free to write us and request a private appointment. Worldwide mailing addresses are as follows:

- United States: P.O. Box 111, Pasadena, California 91123. (Or simply dial this toll-free number in the *continental* U.S.: 1-800-423-4444. Readers in California, Alaska and Hawaii may call 213-577-5555 collect.)
- United Kingdom, rest of Europe and Middle East: P.O. Box 111, Borehamwood, Herts., England WD6 1LU. (Or dial this number in the U.K.: Radlett 01-953-1633.)
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Other areas of the world should check at the end of this booklet for the address of our office nearest you.

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The Worldwide Church of God publishes many colorful, informative booklets on a wide range of biblical topics. Four are listed below.

Why Were You Born?

Was humanity created and put here on earth by an intelligent and Almighty Creator for a definite purpose? And if so, what is that purpose — and why is humanity so totally unaware of it?

What Do You Mean . . . Salvation?

What is salvation? Is it a place, destination, condition, or reward? Not one in a hundred knows what salvation is or how to receive it. Do you?

This Is the Worldwide Church of God

This is the true story of a unique church that has found the solution for the world's ills, and puts it into a living application that is producing a harvest of peace, happiness and abundant well-being worldwide.

All About Water Baptism

Is water baptism essential to salvation? What about the thief on the cross? Was he saved without it? What is the proper form or mode — sprinkling, pouring or immersion? Should babies and children be baptized?

Write for your personal copies of the above booklets. They are sent free as an educational service in the public interest.



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