

## SIN, AND SINS AFTER CONVERSION

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There are Christians who have failed and stumbled many times since their conversion and, as a consequence, doubt their salvation. They may have persistent sins and despite their promises to God to do better, they still fail. Hence the need to look at these subjects again.

There is the unpardonable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit which shall not be forgiven which is set out in Matthew 12. 31-32, and in Mark 3.29 and yet all other sins can be forgiven as stated in Acts 13.39, Titus 2. 13-14 and 1 John 1.9

The unforgivable sin has been defined by some in six ways such as despair, presumption, impertinence, obstinacy, resisting the faith and envy of the welfare of others. This is inaccurate and misleading. It is the sin of disbelief or unbelief. But it is accepted that the rejection of Christ and the permanent rejection of Christ is the unforgivable sin which results in non-entry into heaven since such people are not saved having not received the Lord Jesus as their Personal Saviour.

Some denominations insist that the work of the Holy Spirit is to enable believers to have charismatic gifts and the speaking of tongues is the work that is promoted. But the work of the Holy Spirit is to enable us to accept Christ as Saviour and to teach us the truth drawing attention to Christ and not to self and to enable us to please God allowing the Spirit to indwell us. The greatest gift is the gift of Christ and certainly not the speaking in tongues.

God's ability to save is not limited by man's sinfulness.

Those who reject Christ often have an alternative-following such as a false religion or an ideology such as spiritualism. These alternatives include those people who, consequently, engage in rampant immorality and homosexuality (Romans 1. 16-17). Men love lasciviousness says Ephesians 4.9 and lasciviousness is

Debauchery      indulgence in sexual pleasure and intemperance

Lewdness        preoccupation with sex and lustfulness

Licentiousness    lacking legal and moral restraint and a disregard for decency and correctness

Racism is a disregard for decency and correctness because it is prejudice, hatred and discrimination against people and can be a religious crime such as hatred for Jews and Christians. A left wing politician and an atheist is George Galloway who has openly and repeatedly expressed his hatred of the Jews, his racism and bigotry. Hatred and racism is inconsistent with the Christian life

1 Corinthians 6 lists ten types of people who will not enter heaven because of their unrighteous acts. They are

Fornicators      meaning those who have sex before marriage and this would include 'living in sin'

Idolators        those who worship or devote themselves to false gods or other ideologies

Adulterers      refers to those who are sexually unfaithful to husband or wife

Effeminate      a man displaying the characteristics of a woman

Homosexuals	one who prefers or loves someone of the same sex and may have sex with them
Thieves	those who steal and take what is not theirs
Covetous	longing to possess what someone else has.
Drunkards	someone who is frequently or habitually drunk
Revilers	someone who is abusive and scornful, who speaks and writes offensively about others unfairly.
Swindlers	those who cheat and defraud

Of course, if they repent and turn away from these evil things and accept the Lord Jesus, He will receive them. It must be remembered that Paul was writing to the Corinthians who had indulged in these things in the past. They had been a wayward church not only in their lifestyle but in the promotion of self and speaking in tongues.

Hebrews 10.26 refers to wilful sin for which there is no second chance. This is the unforgivable sin, but note it is here written to Jews and refers to the sin of apostasy, the rejection of Christ as the propitiation for sins and not only the rejection of Christ but, often, the consequent adherence to something or someone else.

There is another usual interpretation of this verse which is akin to the first interpretation. F B Hole refers to wilful sins as to forsake the faith of Christ with one's eyes open. No true believer would do this but a professed believer may do so and this is serious because his/her faith is or was never real.

In Luke 5.32, we read that the Lord Jesus came into the world to call sinners to repentance. In Acts 17.30, it reads that God commands all people everywhere to repent. Among other things, this is surely an indication of God's will that men repent and come to a knowledge of all the truth and be saved.

We should define sin. It is the transgression of any of God's law (1 John 3.4) and any disobedience to God or any rebellion against Him (Deuteronomy 9.7). Some Christians believe that there are degrees of sin and we have already seen what the unforgivable sin is.

Some say that repentance is not turning from sin but rather changing one's mind. It is certainly not saying sorry but is much more than that. Sorrow for sins and contrition are important but it is an attitude to not repeat the wrong done; it is the acknowledgment and acceptance of God's standards and not our own; it is giving God the rightful places in our lives.

Nonetheless, as believers, we continue to fail. In Romans 7, Paul laments this condition. He writes that in him dwelleth no good thing and he does not know how to perform good. The good that he would like to do, he does not, and the evil that he does not want to do, he does. He has a war within himself and calls himself a wretched man. Paul calls himself O wretched man who shall deliver me? And the passage refers to the deliverance available in the Lord Jesus.

As God calls all to repentance it indicates His Will is that all men come to a knowledge of all the truth and be saved. It is also said the God would not save someone who has accepted Christ as Saviour and then jettison that person and take away their salvation.

1 Corinthians 3 is a comfort. Whatever we as Christians produce in life, we may receive a reward or not but we are still saved but as by fire even because our Christian living was worthless, shallow and of inferior quality. Leon Morris refers to this as a man escaping the flames to reach safety.

There is in the Christian life, examples of hypocrisy, false doctrine and arrogant ignorance. Linda responded to the Gospel and was baptised. Then the church, an Elim Pentecostal Church, insisted that she was not saved since she had not spoken in tongues and was not baptised in the Holy Spirit. This church was cruel to her and both totally despicable and wrong and so she will have nothing to do with Christianity. I can understand why she has reacted like this and it is true that this church was decidedly wicked and its reveals the false doctrine of such churches.

How does Linda stand before God? How does that church stand?

A friend returned to the Catholic Church after a lapse of several years. The priest scolded him for not coming to confession for a while and added, "If you don't come, I cannot absolve you from your sins." My friend replied, "Only God can forgive sins!" He was right. Consult Luke 5. 20ff and other similar verses.

While repentance is essential, the consequences of our sins may remain. If we have gone to prison that will be on record and people will know. If we have confessed to an affair that information will not go away. But an alleged small sin, if there are degrees of sin, could also linger on and, sadly, we live in a society where people are judgmental and unforgiving.

It is sad to mention that some Christians are guilty of peculiar sins. A man in an evangelical church asked to stand down from his responsibilities in the church for undisclosed personal reasons. He was hounded to give his reasons but did not. He was put out of that church and publicly disgraced. He was accused of not having fellowship by refusing to give reasons. That was not a matter of fellowship but nosiness. Some Christians believe fellowship is sharing everything, even personal matters, and that is not fellowship. Fellowship is always on spiritual matters Read 1 John 3.

J N Darby wrote "All our sins were future when Christ bore them. He did not only bare them up to the time of our conversion. If only sins before our conversion are forgiven, then those sins that follow our conversion and up to the moment of our death can never be forgiven at all. Therefore, we would all be lost; no one would be saved. We read that Christ died for our sins once. He cannot die again.

Sin in the believer does not alter the fact that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ (Romans 8. 1). It does not mean that our sins are passed over. It is upon confession and repentance that we are forgiven. We may be chastened by God but we are not lost. Our salvation is not in jeopardy; our fellowship is affected though. Yet Christ is still Our Advocate. The value of His precious Blood was and is the ground for all our sins being forgiven including those of the past, present and the future. Not only does the Blood cleanse from sin but the heart, the life itself, is 'sprinkled' from an evil conscience. There is both present cleansing and peace."

A word of warning must be made here. That the Lord Jesus died for all sins before we were born does not mean that we can sin with impunity. As Christians we must, with God's help, do all we can to live the life that pleases Him.

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