

20th Century Bible Course

LESSON EIGHTEEN

Dear Student Friend:

A large chunk of ice on which a carcass of a calf had been thrown, was floating down the great Niagara River toward the falls. An eagle circling overhead came down and landed gracefully upon the dead animal, eager for a good meal. Closer and closer the ice floe came to the treacherous falls, but the eagle had no fear. He knew the power of this mighty wings would put him to flight in a moment of time.

On the shore a group of winter tourists held their breath as the ice shelf began to swirl in the strong current. Why didn't that eagle forget the calf and take off? A few seconds before the deadly drop, the great bird spread out his massive wings for the lift-off-those wings that would lift him high into the air and clear him of the dangerous falls. But this time the wings were powerless. Unnoticed by the eagle, his talons had frozen into the ice and he could not escape. While the crowd on shore watched in stunned silence, the helpless eagle frantically flapped his great wings again, but to no avail. The ice and eagle were dashed to pieces on the rocks below.

The saddest spectacle in all the world-much sadder than the tragic and unnecessary fate of that eagle-is the man or woman who has committed the unpardonable sin. The saddest verse in all the Bible, perhaps, is found in one of Jeremiah's lamentations over the plight of Israel's sins: "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved" (Jeremiah 8:20).

Many people are confused about the unpardonable sin. There has been so much speculation about it. How do we commit it, and how shall we know if we may have already committed it?

First, let me hasten to explain that our God is a God of love. He desires that everyone should be saved, and has made adequate provision for it. Why then, should there be an unpardonable sin? If full arrangement has been made to pardon our sins, what does an "unpardonable" sin mean?

These are some of the questions this lesson will answer.

Cordially yours,

Your Bible Instructor

LESSON 18

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

SCRIPTURE READING: GENESIS 25:29-34 (OT 29 [16]); 27:30-40 (OT 31 [18])

1. What does the apostle John call the sin that is so terrible that God cannot forgive it? 1 John 5:16

"There is a _____."

2. What sin did Jesus say cannot be forgiven? Matthew 12:31,32 _____

There is one thing God will never do, and that is to choose for us. Heaven has already chosen to pay the greatest possible price (Jesus), in order to provide the greatest power possible (the Holy Spirit) to be with us, but each person must decide his own destiny. If we follow the leading of God's Spirit, we shall be saved; if we do not, we shall be lost.

Because of the importance of the work and role of the Holy Spirit-with which the unpardonable sin has to do-let us consider this first of all.

Part 1--WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

1. With whom is the Holy Spirit closely associated? Matthew 28:19 (NT 31 [23]); 1 John 5:7 _____

2. After Jesus' baptism, how did the Holy Spirit manifest Himself? Matthew 3:16, 17 _____

3. Who does the Holy Spirit represent? John 16:13-15 _____

The Holy Ghost is Christ's representative on earth. The nature of the Holy Spirit is a mystery. Some people may bring together passages of Scripture and put their own human construction on them, but the acceptance of these views will not strengthen Christians. Regarding such mysteries silence is golden.

The human Jesus could be in only one place at a time. The Holy Spirit may be everywhere at once. "It is expedient for you that I go away," Jesus said (verse 7), for then He could send the Spirit in special power to be with His children in all parts of the world at all times.

Part 2-- WHAT IS THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

1. What three things does the Holy Spirit do? (verse 8) "He will reprove the world of _____, and of _____, and of _____."

"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). Since there is no salvation apart from Christ (Acts 4:12), unbelief in Him is sin of the deepest hue. No wonder John calls special attention to the work of the Holy Spirit in convincing us that Jesus is, indeed, our Saviour.

Righteousness is "right doing." Since the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, and sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4), the Spirit must, of necessity, uphold the righteous and unchangeable character of the law. He whose life is guided by the principles of the ten commandments will live a life of right living.

There is another aspect of righteousness implied in this passage (John 16:10). "Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." What does Christ's going to the Father have to do with righteousness? The *Living Bible* puts it this way: "Righteousness is available because I go to my Father." Jesus has ascended to His Father, where He intercedes on behalf of those who accept Him as their Saviour (Hebrews 7:25; 9:24). Paul says, "They which receive abundance of grace and of the *gift of righteousness* shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ..... By the righteousness of one the free gift [righteousness] came upon all men unto justification of life" (Romans 5:17, 18). What a thought! What a gift! Not only did Jesus pay our death penalty on the cross, but by living sinlessly here on earth He earned the right to give us His perfect life as a gift. God actually made Jesus "to be sin for us,... that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

2. How many must appear in the judgment? 2 Corinthians 5:10 _____

If all the world is to be judged, if Satan and the fallen angels are to be judged (Jude 6), "how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (Hebrews 2:2,3).

The judgment is closely related to God's law. "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty" (James 2:12). God "hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained" (Acts 17:31). It is the work of the Spirit to impress upon the minds of men the truth that every responsible being must one day give an account to God.

3. By what other name is the Holy Spirit called? John 14:16 _____

If we will throw ourselves upon God's mercy and utterly abandon ourselves to the do-ing of His will, His Holy Spirit will comfort our troubled hearts.

4. By whom is one born into God's family? John 3:5 _____

The transfer from Adam's family into God's family is called the new birth. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12). This new life is more than a modification or improvement of the old sinful life-it is actually a transformation of nature. With self and sin now dead, a new life in Christ begins. Such a transformation can be brought about only by the Holy Spirit.

5. With whom does the Holy Spirit dwell? John 14:17 _____

6. What is another function of the Holy Spirit? Romans 8:26 _____

Since the Spirit dwells in us, He knows all our needs. And being a member of the Godhead, He also knows how to present our problems in heaven.

Thought question: Many people are timid about praying before others, saying that they can't pray "beautiful prayers." How does this verse give us reassurance on this problem?

7. What is another important work of the Holy Spirit?

John 16:13 "He will _____ into all truth." **Romans 8:14** "As many as are _____, they are the sons of God."

We do not receive all truth at one time (John 16:12). The names of Wycliffe, Huss, Jerome, Luther, Knox, Calvin, Wesley, and many others, shine with luster on the pages of history, recording the eradication of error and the advancement of truth. Unfortunately, too many stop right in the tracks of these great men and go no farther.

When the Pilgrims were about to board the *Mayflower* for their historic voyage to the New World, they gathered on the shore of Holland with their friends who were remaining. Their pastor, John Robinson, spoke these words of farewell, which all would do well to

heed: "Brethren, ... I charge you before God and His blessed angels to follow me no farther than I have followed Christ. If God should reveal anything to you by any other instrument of His, be as ready to receive it as you ever were to receive any truth by my ministry; for I am very confident that the Lord hath more truth and light yet to break forth out of His Holy Word."

God does not hold us responsible for light we do not have, but He does hold us responsible for that which we do have or might have if we had improved every opportunity of knowing His will (John 9:41; Matthew 13:15).

8. What further help does the Spirit give us? John 14:26 _____

9. Who gives us power to witness for Christ? Acts 1:8 _____

"I have been on the mountaintop for five years," testified one man to Mr. Moody.

"How many souls have you won to Christ?" asked the great man of God. The man confessed that he had not won any.

"That," replied Moody, "is not the kind of mountaintop experience we need." Christians should be willing to do more than believe on Christ; they are called upon to be His witnesses to an unbelieving world.

10. By whom is our redemption sealed? Ephesians 4:30 _____

The Spirit is not the seal; He is the agent who seals us with the seal of God (Revelation 7:3). In another lesson we shall learn more about this seal of God.

How important the Spirit's work is, can be better appreciated as we review the many facets of His ministry for us:

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| 1. He convinces men of sin. | 7. He intercedes for men. |
| 2. He convinces men of righteousness. | 8. He guides men. |
| 3. He convinces men of judgment. | 9. He teaches men, and brings things to their remembrance. |
| 4. He does the work of a comforter. | 10. He gives power to witness for Christ. |
| 5. He brings about the new birth. | 11. He seals men unto the day of their redemption. |
| 6. He dwells in the hearts of all who have accepted Jesus. | |

Part 3-- WHAT IS THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST?

I. With what kind of sin did David equate the "great transgression"? Psalm 19:1 _____

Presumptuous sin is deliberately choosing our own way instead of God's, and then presuming that it doesn't matter to Him. It is dangerous to assume that because God is good He will forgive all sins under all conditions. The experiences of Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1, 2); of Esau and the birthright (Genesis 25:29-34; 27:30-40; Hebrews 12:16, 17); of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11); and of people in Noah's day (Genesis 6:3-7), show us how God feels about it when

someone deliberately presumes upon His mercy and goodness.

2. In what ways may one commit the unpardonable sin?

a. 1 John 1:9

An unconfessed sin is an unpardoned sin, and only those who confess and forsake their sins shall have mercy (Proverbs 28:13). While no sin is too great for God to forgive, no sin, no matter how small, can be forgiven if it is not sincerely confessed.

b. Hebrews 2:3 "How shall we escape if we _____ so great salvation."

However good our intentions, if we persistently put off the appeals of God's Spirit, we tread on dangerous ground. To neglect truth is to reject truth. For most people "tomorrow" never comes.

c. John 12:35 "Walk while ye have the light, _____."

What is light? "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a *light* unto my path" (Psalm 119:105). "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Therefore, light is truth. As we study God's Word-the truth as it is in Jesus (Ephesians 4:21), the Holy Spirit impresses us to follow it. What a high value the Lord places upon truth! Did you realize that all who perish will be lost because they never developed a "love of the truth, that they might be saved"? (2 Thessalonians 2:10). God wants everyone saved and "to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4), but not all choose to follow truth. And truth that is not obeyed soon turns to darkness (John 12:35).

3. Will the Spirit indefinitely plead with us? Genesis 6:3

It is possible to so accustom ourselves to the voice of the Spirit that we become hardened. Suppose you ignore the alarm clock when it rings? How long before you would not hear it at all? Our hearts are very sensitive to God's Spirit when He first speaks to us, but if we refuse to heed, His voice gradually becomes so dim we no longer hear it at all.

You see, the unpardonable sin is not a specific sin which attaches itself to our life. Rather, it is a condition we reach by resisting God's Spirit. When a man first commits a wrong, he feels guilty and conscience-smitten about it, but the longer he continues to commit that wrong, the less troubled he is until at last he comes to look at it as no sin at all.

Part 4-- CAN A MAN KNOW WHEN HE HAS COMMITTED THE UNPARDONABLE SIN?

1. What class of people will think they are saved, but are actually lost? Matthew 7:21-24

These people are Christians. They call Christ their Lord. They even perform miracles in His name! But they never developed a "love for the truth." They were "religious," but never bothered to find out what Christ's will was, or if they did, they assumed that their good works and miracles placed God's seal of approval on their lives, whether or not they obeyed His word. "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Jesus once asked (Luke 6:46). And that's an excellent question to ask ourselves.

2. How can a person be sure he knows God's will? John 7:17 "If any man _____, he shall know of the doctrine."

What a promise! If we determine to do God's will regardless what others do or think, regardless of ridicule or persecution, regardless whether we lose our friends, our family, or life itself, Jesus promises to be responsible that we are not deceived. On the other hand, this implies that if we are unwilling to be 100 percent the Lord's, if the life style He requires doesn't fit our plans, then we lay ourselves open to commit the unpardonable sin. One must *first* determine that, come what may, He will follow the Lord in every particular as His will is revealed. Then he may claim this wonderful promise.

Jesus said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). The man that accepts Christ as Lord and Saviour, in faith confessing his sins and fully surrendering himself to do God's will, may know that he has not committed the unpardonable sin. If he does not come to Jesus, he may be equally certain that he is in grave danger of committing it.

Jesus tasted "death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9). Yet most men will never benefit by Christ's death, because they will not heed the gentle calls, the persistent movings of the Holy Spirit.

One more word. ***If you have a desire to follow Jesus, you have not yet sinned against the Holy Ghost, for that very desire is the work of the Spirit on your heart.***