

FOUR CATEGORIES OF SIN

Before we begin I'd like to mention two people I'd like you to be praying for. By the time you listen to this CD I will have baptized a 12 year old boy, and I know the devil isn't happy about it, he never is when someone has made a decision to bury self in the watery grave and rise to walk even as Jesus walked, and I know our adversary will do everything in his power to discourage him and try to make him think that being a true follower of Jesus is just too hard and that he could have much more fun if he would just give in to the lusts of the flesh, and of course that's a lie. This boy's name is Jonah.

The other person I'd like you to remember is another young man, a little older, but still a young man who has dedicated his life to proclaim the truth for this time to his fellow countrymen in the Philippines, his name is Robin. I've been corresponding with him since he was 17 years old and now he's 23 and we've been supporting him as a Bible worker for the better part of a year now. He's doing a good work of preaching and teaching as he travels around and he needs our prayers as he goes about spreading the good news. This is the same young man some of you helped purchase a lap top for a couple years ago so he could have the tools he needs as he ministers to several small home church groups. And so, please pray for Jonah and Robin that they would both be faithful to their calling.

This morning I want to talk to you about four categories of sin. Sins of ignorance; impulsive sins; deliberate sins; and the unpardonable sin, and we'll be going into some detail about each one to find out what the consequences are, but before we do, I'd like to define each one of these sins a little bit more fully.

Sins of ignorance are sins that are committed unawares, unknowingly, or unconsciously. Impulsive sins are spontaneous sins, or sins without forethought. Deliberate sins are willful sins, known sins, intentional sins, and presumptuous sins. And the unpardonable sin is the sin against the Holy Ghost, or blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which is unforgivable, or too severe to be pardoned, and as a result salvation becomes absolutely impossible, not because God would have it so, but because the choices of the individual have made it so.

Let's take about sins of ignorance to begin with, because these type of sins are the least offensive to God since they're committed unknowingly, and I don't hesitate to say that all of us have committed this type of sin and might possibly be doing so even now without knowing it, because none of us know everything, do we? And the Ten Commandments are so broad and far reaching in their application that it may be difficult to know when one is being violated, because they include not only our actions, but our thoughts and motives as well.

In **Numbers chapter 15** it speaks of sins of ignorance and we'll take a look at that in just a minute. But even here there are two categories, because a sin of ignorance can be no fault of our own, or it can be self inflicted. What do I mean by that? Well, if you have never had the opportunity to know that a particular sin is a sin, then God doesn't hold you responsible for it, but if you've had the opportunity to educate yourself and you have neglected to do so, then that's an entirely different matter. It's still a sin of ignorance, but it could have been known to be sin if the word of God had been studied more diligently, and so there is some personal responsibility with being neglectful or willfully ignorant.

For instance, I was talking to someone one day about a certain item they used to buy at the store, and when I asked them if they had ever read the label, because I knew there was something in it they shouldn't be eating, they said "no, and please don't tell me, because then I'd have to stop eating it." Friends, that is willful ignorance, and a person that thinks that way will move very quickly through the next two categories and finally to the fourth if they don't do something about it while they have the opportunity. And so they will have to repent and confess and educate themselves or they will be lost if they continue on in that kind of ignorance.

Before we read **Numbers 15**, let me read you a couple examples of willful ignorance from the Spirit of Prophecy. The first is from ***Maranatha, page 218***, but before we read let's pray. [Prayer is offered] "Those who indulge appetite and passion and close their eyes to the light for fear they will see sinful indulgences which they are unwilling to forsake, are guilty before God."

And the next one is from ***Last Day Events, page 218***, "Those who have an opportunity to hear the truth and yet take no pains to hear or understand it, thinking that if they do not hear they will not be accountable, will be judged guilty before God the same as if they had heard and rejected. There will be no excuse for those who choose to go in error when they might understand what is truth. In His sufferings and death Jesus has made atonement for all sins of ignorance, but there is no provision made for willful blindness. We shall not be held accountable for the light that has not reached our perception, but for that which we have resisted and refused."

Now that sounds reasonable, doesn't it? And this is true in every area of our lives. We cannot neglect learning or ignore knowledge we could have gleaned from study and think we are in good standing with God. It just doesn't work that way. The quote we just read said, "Jesus has made atonement for all sins of ignorance, but there is no provision made for willful blindness." And we'll discuss what that means in a few minutes when we talk about willful sin.

So let's turn now to **Numbers 15** and read about sins of ignorance. **Verse 22-29** "And if ye have erred, and not observed all these commandments, which the LORD hath spoken unto Moses, even all that the LORD hath commanded you by the hand of Moses, from the day that the LORD commanded Moses, and henceforward among your generations; then it shall be, if ought be committed by ignorance without the knowledge of the congregation, that all the congregation shall offer one young bullock for a burnt offering, for a sweet savour unto the LORD, with his meat offering, and his drink offering, according to the manner, and one kid of the goats for a sin offering. And the priest shall make an atonement for all the congregation of the children of Israel, and it shall be forgiven them; for it is ignorance: and they shall bring their offering, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD, and their sin offering before the LORD, for their ignorance: and it shall be forgiven all the congregation of the children of Israel, and the stranger that sojourneth among them; seeing all the people were in ignorance. And if any soul sin through ignorance, then he shall bring a she goat of the first year for a sin offering. And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the LORD, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him. Ye shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance, both him that is born among the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them."

Then the next couple verses speak of presumptuous sin and what the consequences were for that type of sin. And so, we'll read the next couple verses, but again, I'll comment more fully when we get to that point in our study.

Verses 30, 31 "But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of the LORD, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him."

And then the next few verses talk about the man that went out and picked up sticks on the Sabbath to build a fire and how he was stoned to death for his presumptuous sin, but we'll get to that.

Now what do you think is meant by the phrase to be "Cut off from among the people"? Usually we think of the death penalty, don't we? But it didn't always mean death. Sometimes it meant being separated, banished, or exiled from the congregation. Today we would say getting kicked out of the church, or being disfellowshipped, and sometimes it did indeed mean death, it just depended on the severity of the sin, the knowledge of the one who committed the sin, and the circumstances involved.

There were many many reasons to be cut off from among the people during Old Testament times, way more than we have time to go into today, but they all mean either death or banishment from the assembly so others would not be influenced or contaminated. Sometimes being cut off meant there was to be no contact with an individual. They were excluded from the congregation to save the rest from becoming infected, either by a literal disease, like leprosy, or the spiritual disease of sin. And so, being cut off meant being removed from those who have not yet been defiled, and also as an example of the consequences of disobedience.

In **Numbers 19:20** it speaks of the person who touches a corpse and fails to be sprinkled with the water of purification as being cut off from the congregation, but that didn't necessarily mean they couldn't be reinstated if they repented and decided to follow the rules. In this instance, a person was cut off because they were unclean, and in their uncleanness they defiled the sanctuary, but just as there was a way to cleanse the sanctuary, there was also a way to cleanse the sinner just as there is today.

But no matter how you cut it, being cut off meant they lost their salvation, either permanently or temporarily, depending on what they decided to do about it, and it's the same today. We can't be in a saved condition while we are guilty of sin, unless it's a sin of ignorance. We just need to know that God is not unreasonable and less loving and compassionate than human beings, but at the same time He will meet out justice.

Have you ever noticed that during Old Testament times God seemed more harsh and unforgiving than during New Testament times? Well, there was a reason, and it wasn't because God was having a bad day anciently, but is more mellow today. The Bible testifies that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and that He is no respecter of persons, so why the seeming difference?

Well, one thing to keep in mind is that during Old Testament times Israel existed under a theocracy; that is, they were ruled directly by God through their religious leaders, with the physical signs that accompanied that, and the people acknowledged and accepted that kind of government, which made them more directly responsible for disobedience, and thus the penalty was, we would say, more swift and severe. However, the time came when the leadership under God became corrupt, no longer listening to Him, and could no longer be His mouthpiece, and they ended up clamoring for a king to rule over them like all the other nations, and if you've done much reading you know that things didn't go so well when they were ruled by kings.

And did you know that the Seventh-day Adventist denomination has repeated this history? I don't want to get too far off subject, but the Spirit of Prophecy is very clear on this point.

The whole denomination with all its leaders and institutions were under a theocracy at first. Notice what it says in *Testimonies For The Church, Volume 7, page 108*, “We are sacredly denominated by God, and are under His theocracy.” But just like Israel, the time came when the prophet also said plainly in *Last Day Events, page 50* that, “It has been some years since I have considered the General Conference as the voice of God. . . That these men should stand in a sacred place, to be as the voice of God to the people (**that's a theocracy**), as we once believed the General Conference to be, that is past.”

And it was around this same time when Ellen White began warning about “Kingly power.” And so, because men in leadership positions began to usurp God's position in the theocracy, the theocracy came to an end, and since that time things have not gone well, and will only continue to get worse according to *Special Testimonies, series B, page 57*. I just wanted to share that little tidbit with you before we move on.

Now back to our subject. We're told in **Acts 17:20** that God winks at sins of ignorance, but when sins of ignorance are no longer sins of ignorance, they require a sacrifice to make things better. Just as God required a sacrifice to be offered during Old Testament times for sins of ignorance once the knowledge of them were realized, so He requires a sacrifice to atone for sins of ignorance today, only the sacrifice today has been made through the shed blood of Christ, and if we will accept it and acknowledge our wrong doing, we can be forgiven of these type of sins. Praise the Lord!

Now let's talk about impulsive sins for a minute. As I mentioned earlier, impulsive sins are spontaneous sins, sins without forethought, or sins that are unintentional. The apostle Peter is a good example of someone who committed impulsive sins. He didn't intend to do wrong, it just happened, either at a weak moment or because he spoke or acted before he thought things through. Impulsive sins are not premeditated. They're kind of like saying a bad word when you hit your thumb with a hammer or bang your head on something. The words just roll out and you wonder, “Where did that come from.” You thought you were over saying or doing that kind of thing, but it happens and you're immediately ashamed of yourself and you apologize to the Lord and to anyone else that may have heard you.

But let me say this so you don't get the wrong idea; even impulsive sins can and must be overcome. I don't know if Jesus ever hit His thumb with a hammer in the carpenter shop or bumped His head, but I can assure you that a bad word never escaped His lips, regardless of the situation, and isn't it our goal to become Christ-like? And isn't that what it means to be a Christian? Impulsive sins can be overcome, but in order to do so we need to be born again every day; we need to partake of the divine nature every day. If we are committing impulsive sins, how can Jesus be in control when we do? He can't, and if

He isn't, then we're in a heap of trouble. Just as Peter gained the victory over this type of sin, so can we; and we must.

Turn with me to **Galatians 6:1** and we'll read about impulsive sin. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault (**or surprised by an unintentional sin**), ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

Commenting on this verse, notice what it says in ***Gospel Workers, pages 397, 398***. "Here is a special direction to deal tenderly with those overtaken in a fault. This word 'overtaken' must have its full significance. It describes something different from deliberate sin; it applies to one who is led into sin unawares through want of watchfulness and prayer, not discerning the temptation of Satan, and so falling into his snare. **(And so you see, this kind of sin can be overcome, but how? Through watchfulness and prayer)** There is a difference to be made in the case of one who deliberately enters into temptation, who marks out an evil course, covering his sins skillfully, that he may not be detected. More decisive measures are needed to check the premeditated sin **(that means there's hope even for this kind of sin, but we'll get to that)**; but the apostle directs the treatment to be given to those who are 'overtaken' or surprised, or overcome by temptation. 'Ye which are spiritual,' you who have a connection with God, 'restore such a one in the spirit of meekness,' —do not crush all hope and courage out of the soul, but restore him in meekness, 'considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.' Faithful reproofs will be needed, and kindly counsel and supplications to God to bring him to see his sin and danger. The original word translated 'restore,' means to set in joint, as a dislocated bone. Efforts should be made to bring him to himself, by convincing him of his sin and error, that he may not, like a limb hopelessly diseased, be severed from the body. He is to be loved, because Christ loved us in our weakness and errors. There should be no triumphing in a brother's fall; but in meekness, in the fear of God, in love for his soul, we should seek to save him from ruin."

So, that's what inspiration says about impulsive sins, but what about deliberate sin? What about willful sin, known sin, intentional sin, high-handed sin, and sin that has been knowingly practiced for a period of time? Is there any hope for a person like that?

A couple different times over the years I've had people tell me that deliberate sin, or presumptuous sin cannot be forgiven, that only sins of ignorance and impulsive sins can be forgiven, and if you knowingly sin after you've come to Christ and accepted Him as your Savior, there's no hope for you. If that were true, then that would mean that every deliberate sin would be the unpardonable sin, and that, in my estimation, is not reasonable or acceptable. Neither do I think it's Biblical. There are, however, some verses in the Bible that make it sound like deliberate sin is unforgivable. It's sort of like the man

who picked up sticks on the Sabbath day, he sinned deliberately, didn't he? And he paid the ultimate price for doing so, and Uzzah who touched the ark of the covenant and was struck down for doing so, but there are also other verses that would contradict the idea that deliberate sin is unforgivable, and I hope by the time we're done we'll get a balanced picture about this subject.

Probably two of the most often used texts in the Bible that are used to prove that deliberate sins are unforgivable are in **Hebrews chapter 6 and chapter 10**, so let's look at those and then we'll talk about it.

First of all let's look at **Hebrews 10:26, 27** "For if we sin wilfully (**now let's stop right there. The word "Sin" in this verse is what's called an active present participle in the Greek, and active present participles are formed by adding "ing" to the ending. And so, it would be better translated "If we go on sinning, or persist in willful sin"**) 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."

These verses I believe are referring to the unpardonable sin, because **verse 29** talks about trampling under foot the Son of God and insulting the Holy Spirit, and that's what leads to the unpardonable sin, but that's not to say that everyone who sins deliberately has committed the unpardonable sin. The unpardonable sin is the result of deliberately continuing to sin, or committing the same sin repeatedly until the Holy Spirit can no longer convict of sin, and that doesn't happen with just one sin, be it ignorantly, impulsively, or deliberately.

I'm probably getting ahead of myself here, but while we're talking about this, let me just say that there are many people who are afraid they may have committed the unpardonable sin, and just in case you are one of them I'd like to read you something encouraging.

This is from the ***The Present Truth, May 31, 1900***, "The devil has told many people that they have committed the unpardonable sin, and that God has forsaken them; and he has, sad to say, agents on earth, who repeat the words. But 'the Lord will not cast off for ever. He that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out.' John 5:37. 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' Hebrews 13:5. Whoever is oppressed by the thought that God has forsaken him, may know that He has not; because the fact that he feels sad over the supposed casting off, is proof that he does not wish to be separate from God; and it is only man

that can effect any such separation.”

Listen friends, people need hope, and it's my job as a minister to give them that hope! And where I can I will, but I also have to tell them that God is a God of justice as well as love and mercy, and there has to be a balance that's sometimes difficult to achieve, but if we are worked by the Holy Spirit, we will find that balance and souls will be saved in God's kingdom. And isn't that what we all want?

John 3:17 says God didn't send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. No matter what kind of sin you've been guilty of, you will be forgiven if you come to Jesus in repentance and confession, period! And God wants you to know that, but He also wants you to know that if you don't come to Him and decide instead to persist in sin, He can't save you, and eventually you will sin one time too many and then there will be no hope.

There are several examples of people in the Bible who sinned deliberately and still found forgiveness, that's undeniable. A few that come to mind are Mary Magdalene, the prodigal son, and David. In **Psalm 51:12** David prayed that God would restore unto him the joy of salvation, and you can't restore something you never had. And so, if David could be forgiven for the terrible sin he committed after he had come to a knowledge of the truth, surely God can forgive us as well.

The people I just mentioned obviously knew the truth and deliberately sinned knowing full well that what they were doing was wrong, but they did it anyway. And someone might say, “Yeah, but they were probably never converted in the first place.” To you I would say that there is no evidence that they were not converted. Mary had demons cast out of her seven times, and when the demons left, Jesus filled the vacuum, and when that happens conversion takes place. Mary fell time after time and she was cleansed and forgiven each time and eventually she learned to sit at the feet of Jesus even when Jesus wasn't around, and that's what we all need to learn if we find ourselves in her shoes.

And what about the sins of ancient Israel, weren't they deliberate for the most part? Yet, God called them to return to Him time after time after time and said He would forgive their sins. You can read that in **Hosea 14:1-4**. God begged them to return and that He would heal all their backslidings, and you can't backslide unless you already knew the way of salvation and accepted it.

Notice what God told Jeremiah to say to Israel who had sinned repeatedly, and were in captivity for it. **Jeremiah 3:12-14**, "Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you."

There's an account of a man in *Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce*, **pages 249, 250** who committed a terrible and deliberate sin in the blazing light of present truth, and who was not only disfellowshipped, but was never to be taken back into fellowship again, even if he repented ever so heartily we are told, and yet sister White said, "If he goes to heaven, it must be alone, without the fellowship of the church." So the possibility existed, even for a man like this to be saved in the end should he turn his life around.

Notice this next statement from *Ministry of Healing*, **page 92, 93**, "There are multitudes today as truly under the power of evil spirits as was the demoniac of Capernaum. All who willfully depart from God's commandments (**all who what? "willfully depart from God's commandments"**) are placing themselves under the control of Satan. Many a man tampers with evil, thinking that he can break away at pleasure; but he is lured on and on (**that's repeated sin by the way**), until he finds himself controlled by a will stronger than his own. He cannot escape its mysterious power. Secret sin or master passion may hold him a captive as helpless as was the demoniac of Capernaum. Yet his condition is not hopeless." And I say praise the Lord!

Now let me ask you, did the demoniac of Capernaum find forgiveness after he willfully departed from God's commandments? Absolutely he did! And on **page 91** of the same book, it makes it clear that this man became demon possessed because of his own willful and repeated sin.

The quote continues, "God does not control our minds without our consent; but every man is free to choose what power he will have to rule over him. None have fallen so low, none are so vile, but that they may find deliverance in Christ. The demoniac, in place of prayer, could utter only the words of Satan; yet the heart's unspoken appeal was heard. No cry from a soul in need, though it fail of utterance in words, will be unheeded. Those who consent to enter into covenant with God are not left to the power of Satan or to the infirmity of their own nature."

I don't know about you, but I see a great deal of encouragement in the things we've just read, especially for those who may be wondering if they will ever gain the victory with the sin that so easily besets them, but there is hope my friend, and I'm thankful for God's longsuffering, aren't you?

The other text I want to read that's supposed to prove that deliberate sin is unforgivable is in **Hebrews 6:4-6** "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, 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."

The important words to understand here, if we're going to have a correct interpretation, are the words, "If they shall fall away." In the Greek to fall away means to "Apostatize." If a person sins willfully, that doesn't necessarily mean they have apostatized, but more likely that they want to stop sinning, but for whatever reason they've been unable to gain the victory over that particular sin. To apostatize is an open and avowed renouncing of Christ and His cause. These verses, like the ones in Hebrews 10, are referring to the unpardonable sin, and again, the unpardonable sin is not the result of just one sin.

Now please, I don't want you to go away from this study today thinking that you can sin however much you want and still be saved. If you do, you will be making a great mistake. The problem with deliberate sin is that these are the kind of sins that lead to the unpardonable sin, and no one knows at what point God will give them up to their own evil devising if they go on sinning when they know better. If we keep on committing the same sin, the time will come when God will have to say to us, as He said to ancient Israel, "He is joined to his idols", "let him alone", and believe me friend, you don't want these words to be pronounced over you, because again, we don't know at what point that time will come.

We're living during the time of the closing scenes of the investigative judgment and if there was ever a time to be prepared for what's coming, it's today. Paul said, "To day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts," because it leads to the unpardonable sin. We don't want to end up like Pharaoh whose heart became as hard as baked clay that the sun beat upon, but that we might have a heart like wax that will melt as the Son of righteousness shines upon it. The choice is ours, and the difference will become apparent as the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment to come.

Romans 6:23 says, “The wages of sin is death”, and if we didn't read any further it would seem that we're all doomed, wouldn't it? but it does go on. It says, “But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” As we deal with people we must not forget the “but” and just keep hammering the death sentence, because that alone will not drive them to Christ.

It's true that deliberate sin is a very dangerous thing; in fact, it's the most dangerous kind of sin there is, and by continuing in it you are gambling with your eternal life and becoming weaker to resist temptation with each repetition, and it will never be easier than it is right now to make an about-face. And anyway, why, if we truly love Jesus would we want to purposely hurt Him by doing something He's asked us not to do? Why would we want to deliberately sin against the One who sacrificed His life that we might enjoy the things that God has prepared for those that love Him? Oh, we need to fall in love with Jesus, don't we? That's what will make the difference.

Most of the time if we can't seem to stop committing deliberate sin, it's because our devotional life has been suffering. Get back into the word of God and pray like you've never prayed before and you will find the strength you need to be an overcomer. If other things are more important to us than spending time with God, then we will become guilty of deliberate sin sooner or later, and probably sooner. There is no substitute for personal Bible study, prayer, and meditation, and just because you may be busy doing good things for God is no substitute either.

Notice what we're told in *The Desire of Ages, page 362*, “As activity increases and men become successful in doing any work for God, there is danger of trusting to human plans and methods. There is a tendency to pray less, and to have less faith. Like the disciples, we are in danger of losing sight of our dependence on God, and seeking to make a savior of our activity. We need to look constantly to Jesus, realizing that it is His power which does the work. While we are to labor earnestly for the salvation of the lost, we must also take time for meditation, for prayer, and for the study of the word of God. Only the work accomplished with much prayer, and sanctified by the merit of Christ, will in the end prove to have been efficient for good.”

Now obviously God doesn't want us to sin deliberately, but if we do, there is a way of escape from its vicious cycle before it becomes unpardonable. **2 Peter 3:9** says, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count

slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

The “any” and “all” spoken of here means just what it says. The only ones that can't be brought to repentance are those that have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. In Matthew 12:31 Jesus said, “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.”

Now that's pretty clear, isn't it? And it came from the lips of Jesus Himself. Every type of sin can be forgiven, even deliberate sin, but the sin against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven, why? Because when the conscience becomes seared by repeated action, it will feel no need for repentance, because the Holy Spirit can no longer convict a person like that. 1 Timothy 4:2 says a person's conscience can become seared as with a hot iron. The word “seared” means “to render insensitive.” The only way that can happen is to sin repeatedly. It's kind of like scar tissue that can't feel any more, and when the whole conscience becomes scar tissue, it's no longer aware that the Holy Spirit is touching them; they can't feel it, and if they can't feel it, there's no way to bring conviction of sin to the heart, and thus it's impossible for forgiveness to take place. It's not an arbitrary thing on God's part, but entirely our own doing, which is caused by violating a Bible educated conscience.

Let me read a couple statements from God's mouthpiece about the unpardonable sin. ***The Desire of Ages, page 324***, “The most common manifestation of the sin against the Holy Spirit is in persistently slighting Heaven's invitation to repent. Every step in the rejection of Christ is a step toward the rejection of salvation, and toward the sin against the Holy Spirit. In rejecting Christ the Jewish people committed the unpardonable sin; and by refusing the invitation of mercy, we may commit the same error.”

And one more short one from ***The Faith I Live By, page 58***, “No one need look upon the sin against the Holy Ghost as something mysterious and indefinable. The sin against the Holy Ghost is the sin of persistent refusal to respond to the invitation to repent.”

When Jesus said, “the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men,” what did He mean by the word blasphemy? Blasphemy is defined as evil speaking against God, and there are several ways this can be done, but when it's done to the third person of the Godhead, it becomes so serious that

the results become permanent.

Let me read something from *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 5, page 634*, and listen carefully, those of you who have gotten caught up in the error that the Holy Spirit is not a divine being.

“What constitutes the sin against the Holy Ghost? It is willfully attributing to Satan the work of the Holy Spirit.”

Now let me stop right there for a second, because there are some who claim to be Seventh-day Adventists who will tell you that the third person of the Godhead is really Satan, because, they say, the Holy Spirit is only an essence or influence that proceeds from the Father and the Son and is not a personal divine being. And since Satan wanted to be a part of the private council with the Father and Son in the creation of this world but wasn't allowed in, then he represents himself today to all who believe in a heavenly trio, that he is the third person of the Godhead. That my friend is blasphemy!

The quote continues: “For example, suppose that one is a witness of the special work of the Spirit of God. He has convincing evidence that the work is in harmony with the Scriptures, and the Spirit witnesses with his spirit that it is of God. Afterward, however, he falls under temptation; pride, self-sufficiency, or some other evil trait, controls him; and rejecting all the evidence of its divine character, he declares that that which he had before acknowledged to be the power of the Holy Spirit was the power of Satan. It is through the medium of His Spirit that God works upon the human heart; and when men willfully reject the Spirit and declare it to be from Satan, they cut off the channel by which God can communicate with them. By denying the evidence which God has been pleased to give them, they shut out the light which had been shining in their hearts, and as the result they are left in darkness. Thus the words of Christ are verified: ‘If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!’ Matthew 6:23. For a time, persons who have committed this sin may appear to be children of God; but when circumstances arise to develop character and show what manner of spirit they are of, it will be found that they are on the enemy's ground, standing under his black banner.”

Now, just to be clear. I am not saying that those who believe the error I just mentioned have committed the unpardonable sin; that's God's business, but I can tell you one thing, if they continue on in this vain, they will end up committing the sin against the Holy Ghost if they haven't already done so. And

the reason I don't say they have already committed the unpardonable sin is because of the following inspired statement.

And just keep something else in mind. If you pronounce someone who has sinned deliberately, even repeatedly, as having committed the unpardonable sin, then you are in direct violation of the following inspired statement.

The Review and Herald, July 30, 1901 “The Lord sends warnings to His people, not to destroy them, but to correct their errors. I have never been given the testimony to bear to any one, ‘You have committed the unpardonable sin.’ God never told any one to say to a fellow being, ‘You have committed the unpardonable sin. . . It is not like our God. After the disappointment of 1844 there were those who would say to others, ‘You are lost; you have gone too far to be saved.’ Then I was brought to my feet to bid them in the name of the Lord to cease their condemnation. God has never empowered one mortal to say to another mortal, ‘You are lost.’”

Now, a little while ago we read that Jesus can forgive sins of ignorance, but no provision has been made for “Willful blindness”, why? It's because His atonement does not automatically cover willful blindness, or willful sin like it does sins of ignorance. Christ's sacrifice was not made to benefit those who choose to resist conviction and refuse to obey the truth. But that does not mean they must remain willfully blind or continue in willful sin, because God is in the business of opening blind eyes, just as He did when He put clay on the eyes of the blind man. We cannot be reconciled to God as long as we resist the conviction of the Holy Spirit, plain and simple. The atonement was made so we can become one with God, and if we are resisting and refusing, that can't happen. That's why it takes a willingness on our part to be made willing.

A person can be in a saved condition while committing sin ignorantly, but they can't if they're sinning deliberately. Why? Because the atonement only covers sins that have been confessed and forsaken, and when a sin of ignorance becomes known to be a sin and one doesn't stop, then it becomes a deliberate sin and must be acknowledged as such. In other words, the atonement cannot be applied to known sin until it is dealt with; then the atonement can be effectual, but until then a person's sin is upon them and the atonement does them no good while in that condition. In other words, one cannot take advantage of the atonement until they acknowledge their sin.

Let me put it another way, and maybe this will make more sense. The reason sins of ignorance are atoned for and deliberate sins are not, is because sins of ignorance are not known to be sin, and how can you confess something that's unknown? And so the

atonement automatically takes that into consideration and applies the blood. But deliberate sins are known, and therefore must be acknowledged before the atonement can be helpful. The atonement not making provision for willful blindness does not mean that the one who is willfully blind cannot take advantage of the atonement if they meet the conditions, but simply that it's not covered if one decides to remain willfully blind, and it's the same way with impulsive and deliberate sin. As long as they are confessed and forsaken, the atonement will bring us into harmony with God, or at-one-ment with God, or reconciled to God, and I hope that makes sense.

I've been more long-winded today than I intended to be, so let me read something from ***Steps to Christ, pages 64, 65***, and I'll close with this, "There are those who have known the pardoning love of Christ and who really desire to be children of God, yet they realize that their character is imperfect, their life faulty, and they are ready to doubt whether their hearts have been renewed by the Holy Spirit. To such I would say, Do not draw back in despair. We shall often have to bow down and weep at the feet of Jesus because of our shortcomings and mistakes, but we are not to be discouraged. Even if we are overcome by the enemy, we are not cast off, not forsaken and rejected of God. No; Christ is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Said the beloved John, 'These things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' 1 John 2:1. And do not forget the words of Christ, 'The Father Himself loveth you.'" John 16:27. **(And then it says)** He desires to restore you to Himself, **(you see, sin separates us from God, but when it does, God desires to restore us to Himself, and you can't be restored to a position you never had. And so again, there's hope)** He desires to restore you to Himself, to see His own purity and holiness reflected in you. And if you will but yield yourself to Him, He that hath begun a good work in you will carry it forward to the day of Jesus Christ. Pray more fervently; believe more fully. As we come to distrust our own power, let us trust the power of our Redeemer, and we shall praise Him who is the health of our countenance.

"The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer, and your imperfections will be seen in broad and distinct contrast to His perfect nature. This is evidence that Satan's delusions have lost their power; that the vivifying influence of the Spirit of God is arousing you.

"No deep-seated love for Jesus can dwell in the heart that does not realize its own sinfulness. The soul that is transformed by the grace of Christ will admire His divine character; but if we do not see our own moral deformity, it is unmistakable evidence that we have not had a view of the beauty and excellence of Christ.

"The less we see to esteem in ourselves, the more we shall see to esteem in the infinite

purity and loveliness of our Saviour. A view of our sinfulness drives us to Him who can pardon; and when the soul, realizing its helplessness, reaches out after Christ, He will reveal Himself in power. The more our sense of need drives us to Him and to the word of God, the more exalted views we shall have of His character, and the more fully we shall reflect His image.”

Praise God, let's pray.