

THE WILFUL SIN

WHAT IS THE WILFUL SIN?

CONSEQUENCES OF CHRISTIANS SINNING WILFULLY

By Arlen L. Chirwood

“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith [*lit.*, ‘the confession of our hope’] without wavering; for he is faithful that promised;

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge [Gk., *epignosis*, ‘mature 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” (Heb. 10:23-27).

Christ provided Himself as the Sacrifice for sin, His blood is today on the mercy seat in heaven, and He is presently occupying the office of High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary on behalf of sinning Christians.

Christ is presently performing a cleansing from defilement for Christians who sin, and all a Christian needs to do in order to avail himself of this provided cleansing is to confess his sins. When he does this, cleansing occurs (I John 1:9).

In the preceding respect, when dealing with *the wilful sin* in Heb. 10:26 (a sin for which there is no sacrifice), some Bible students look back a few verses (to vv. 19-22, which deal with Christ’s

present high priestly ministry) and attempt to see the wilful sin in verse twenty-six as the actions of a Christian refusing to avail himself of Christ’s present work in the heavenly sanctuary. In this respect, with a Christian rejecting the only existing sacrifice, the matter is viewed as the Christian left without a sacrifice, left in his sins, seemingly providing an explanation for this verse.

The wilful sin in Heb. 10:26, as any sin, results in defilement. But, unlike sin in a general sense, *a different situation exists with this sin.*

Hebrews 10:26 states that *no sacrifice remains, or exists, for those who sin after the manner dealt with by the verse.* And *this alone* would separate the wilful sin from Christ’s present ministry, for, within Christ’s present ministry, *a sacrifice does exist for sinning Christians.* And this sacrifice *continues to exist whether a Christian does or does not avail himself of the provided sacrifice.* One has nothing to do with the other.

How does the wilful sin differ from any other sin which Christians can commit? Is it possible that this sin could somehow be brought under Christ’s present ministry and confessed, with forgiveness resulting from the person’s confession? If so, How? If not, Why not?

Christians harboring sins of the flesh and refusing to confess these sins *cannot possibly* be that which they are warned against in Heb. 10:26. This verse continues the thought from the immediately preceding verses (vv. 23-25), and this thought has nothing whatsoever to do with Christians confessing or not confessing their sins.

Nor can the wilful sin in this verse be thought of in the broad sense of sins committed by Christians in a wilful, or a deliberate, or a knowing manner. If the truth were known, it could probably easily be shown that most sins committed by Christians would fall into a singular category — things which Christians knew were sins before they committed them, knew were sins during the time in which they were committing them, and knew were sins after they had committed them.

The only possible way to properly understand the wilful sin in Heb. 10:26, for which there is no sacrifice, is to view this sin, *contextually, within*

the Book of Hebrews where it is found. If this is not done, a person will invariably go wrong at this point in Scripture.

Note first that all of the warnings in Hebrews are closely related, drawing heavily from the Old Testament types. The second warning (chs. 3, 4) draws from the account of the Israelites under Moses, and the same thought is continued in the third warning (6:4ff), relating the matter to Christians.

In both the type (chs. 3, 4 [second warning]) and the antitype (ch. 6 [third warning]), the sin referenced in the fourth warning (10:26ff) *is openly presented and seen.*

The Israelites under Moses committed a sin for which *there was no sacrifice* (second warning), and Christians today can commit *exactly the same sin*, with the same results following (third warning). Then the fourth warning continues with thoughts pertaining to this sin; and the matter has to do with “so great salvation” (ch. 2 [first warning]), resulting in “blessings” associated with the “birth-right” (ch. 12 [fifth warning]).

That is the broad contextual scope of the matter. The Israelites, in the type, through their actions at Kadesh-Barnea — refusing to go in and take *the land to which they had been called* — committed a sin for which there was *no sacrifice.* And, with there being *no sacrifice* for this sin, God didn’t, He couldn’t, change His mind concerning that which He had decreed pertaining to the matter.

And Christians, in the antitype, can commit *exactly the same sin* relative to *the heavenly land to which they have been called.* And, as in the type, *no sacrifice* exists for such a sin. As in the type, God won’t, He can’t change His mind concerning that which He has decreed pertaining to this sin, if committed by His people today.

This is plain from that which is stated in Heb. 6:4-6, again drawing from the type in chapters three and four — “For it is impossible...if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance...”

(*Ref.* the author’s pamphlet, “If They Shall Fall Away” or to the author’s book, *Let Us Go On*, Chapter V.)

Then note that the reference to this sin is the continuation of a text having to do with a central purpose for Christians assembling together during the present dispensation — whether on Sunday at a regular meeting place, or at any other time or place during the week (vv. 23-25). The particular purpose given in the text is singular.

Christians are to meet together in order to exhort and encourage one another concerning the race of the faith, which has to do with the hope set before each one of them (“profession of our faith” [v. 23, KJV] should be translated, “confession of our hope”). And this hope set before every Christian is the hope that they might one day realize the very thing to which they have been called — *win a crown in the present race of the faith and, as a result, occupy a regal position with Christ in that coming day of His power.*

In short, Christians are exhorted to assemble together for a particular purpose, and then they are warned concerning the danger of failing to assemble together on a regular basis for this purpose. They can either find mutual strength in the race of the faith through assembling together, or they can fail to assemble for this mutual strength and find themselves in danger of *falling away* and becoming involved in that which Scripture refers to as *wilful sin*.

The wilful sin, simply put, has to do with *apostasy, after one has come into a mature knowledge of the things surrounding the hope set before Christians* — something seen in the type in the second warning and in the antitype in the third warning. And committing this sin will result in a Christian failing to come into possession of *so great salvation* (first warning), synonymous with failing to realize *the rights of the firstborn* (fifth warning).

Numbers 15:30, 31, immediately following the account of the Israelites refusal to enter into the land at Kadesh-Barnea (chs. 13, 14), deals with God’s statement concerning a sin for which there was *no sacrifice*. And an example of such a sin — a man violating the Sabbath — immediately follows God’s instructions concerning the matter.

God’s statement concerning a sin for which there was *no sacrifice* in this passage had to do with

a person acting in open rebellion, followed by his being cut off from the people of Israel (which was exactly what occurred at and following the events at Kadesh-Barnea). And the contextual example not only had to do with the experiences of the Israelites, beginning at Kadesh-Barnea (chs. 13, 14), but it also had to do with a man violating the Sabbath (Num. 15:32-36).

As with the Israelites at Kadesh-Barnea, so with the man violating the Sabbath. There was *no sacrifice* for the sin committed by either. Rather, in both instances, the Lord commanded that a *sentence of death* was to be carried out. And, resultingly, an entire accountable generation died on the one hand, and a man was taken outside the camp and stoned on the other.

The land set before Christians is associated with a rest, *a Sabbath rest*, drawing from Gen. 2:1-3 (Heb. 4:4-9). And a Christian turning his back on this land (after coming into a mature knowledge of the things surrounding the land) would be doing exactly the same thing which the Israelites under Moses did at Kadesh-Barnea (after hearing the report concerning the land by the twelve spies).

Then, in another respect, such a Christian would be doing violence to that which God had to say about *the Sabbath rest set before the people of God*, in a similar respect to the man violating the Sabbath in Num. 15:32-36 (for the Sabbath was given to Israel as a *sign* [Ex. 31:13-17]).

The Sabbath was a *sign* pointing to a day of rest following God’s present six days of work. As God rested on the seventh day after working six days to restore a past ruined creation (the material creation) — establishing an unchangeable, foundational pattern — He is going to rest on a seventh day (a 1,000-year day) after working six days (six 1,000-year days — 6,000 years) to restore two present ruined creations (both man and the material creation once again).

Thus, drawing from both Num. 13-15 and Heb. 3, 4, 6, it can easily be shown how Christians, in Heb. 10:26ff, can sin wilfully today. They can do so through only one means: *coming into a mature knowledge of the truth surrounding their calling,*

and then apostatizing (turning away from this truth).

Any Christian committing such an act will have done three things according to Heb. 10:29:

- 1) *Trodden under foot* “the Son of God.”
- 2) *Considered the blood of Christ* “an unholy [‘a common’] thing.”
- 3) *Insulted* “the Spirit of grace.”

God places the wilful sin in a category of this nature simply because of the high place in which He holds that which He has stated concerning the coming reign of His Son. And, according to Scripture, any Christian coming into a mature knowledge of that which God has stated in this realm, and then *turning away* — *apostatizing* — has only one thing awaiting him:

“...a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (v. 27).

Then note how verses thirty and thirty-one parallel II Cor. 5:10, 11:

“For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.

It is a fearful [Gk., *phoberos*, ‘fearful’ in the sense of being ‘terrible,’ ‘frightful’] thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Events of the judgment seat will be one of *the most terrible times* many Christians will ever experience, for Christians who have refused to follow the Spirit’s leadership during the present day and time will, at the judgment seat, “fall into the hands of the living God.” Such Christians will find it to be a “fearful,” “terrible” experience, for there the “*terror of the Lord*” will be manifested, and a *completely just recompense* will be meted out.

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