

THE WILFUL SIN

A SIN HAVING FAR-REACHING RAMIFICATIONS

“For if we sin wilfully 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” (Heb. 10:26, 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 sin. When he does this, cleansing will occur (I John 1:9).

The wilful sin of Heb. 10:26 results in defilement, as any sin. But, a different situation exists with this sin. This verse states that *NO sacrifice* exists for those who sin after the manner dealt with by the verse, which *separates it* from Christ’s present ministry.

How does this 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?

Christ’s Present Ministry

To properly understand *the wilful sin*, for several reasons (one reason being contextual), it should be viewed, first of all, in the light of Christ’s present high priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.

Note the context of Heb. 10:26 (vv. 19-22) and also I John 1:6-2:2. The “blood” of Christ is presently on the mercy seat in the “holiest [Holy of Holies]” of the heavenly sanctuary; and a “new and living way” of access has been provided through the One Who shed this blood, our “high priest over the house of God.”

The *blood of Christ*, presently on the mercy seat of the heavenly sanctuary, “cleanseth [‘keeps on cleansing’]” Christians who have become defiled (through sin) as they “walk [‘keep on walking’] in the light” (I John 1:7; cf. Heb. 10:22).

It is impossible for the ones walking in the light to occupy a position other than being cleansed from sin; but, viewing the other side of the picture, *it is entirely possible* for Christians to *NOT* walk in the light, in which case *there will be NO cleansing*.

To understand *EXACTLY* what is meant by *walking in the light* in I John 1:7, one *MUST*, contextually, draw from the typology of the tabernacle. The light was provided by a seven-leaved golden candlestick inside the Holy Place where the priests carried on part of their ministry, and *the ONLY* way that these priests were permitted to enter the holy place and walk in this light was through a previous cleansing at the brazen laver in the courtyard.

This laver lay between the brazen altar and the Holy Place and had upper and lower basins for washing the hands and feet.

The entire bodies of these priests had been washed upon their entrance into the priesthood (Ex. 29:4; 40:12-15) — an act *NEVER to be repeated* — *BUT*, in their subsequent ministry, *it was necessary* to avail themselves of partial washings (washings of parts of the body) at the laver. Their hands and feet became soiled in their ministry, and these parts of the body had to be cleansed prior to entering the Holy Place (Ex. 30:18-21; 40:30-32).

EXACTLY the same thing holds true for Christians, New Testament priests, in the antitype today. Christians have received a *complete washing* (received at the point of the birth from above, upon their entrance into the priesthood) — *an act NEVER to be repeated*.

But, as the Old Testament priests, *they MUST NOW avail themselves of partial washings in their ministry*. And this is seen in the type through the actions of Old Testament priests washing at the laver.

This is what Jesus alluded to in John 13:8, 10:

“IF I wash [Gk., nipto, referring to a part of the body (the Septuagint uses this same word in Ex. 30:19, 21)] thee not, thou hast NO part with me [note: NOT ‘IN me,’ BUT, ‘WITH me’]”; and “He that is washed [Gk., louo, referring to the entire body (the Septuagint uses this same word in Ex. 29:4; 40:12)] needeth NOT save to wash [Gk., nipto] his feet...”

This is also what is alluded to in Heb. 10:22 and I John 1:7.

Old Testament priests whose hands and feet had become soiled through activity in the courtyard *could NOT bypass the laver and proceed on to the Holy Place.*

NOR can New Testament priests. New Testament priests *MUST FIRST, as the Old Testament priests, avail themselves of cleansing.* Defilement in the Christians’ case comes through contact with sin; and cleansing, according to the context of I John 1:7, is accomplished through confession of sin:

“If we confess our sins, he [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (v. 9).

And this cleansing is accomplished solely on the basis of Christ’s shed blood on the mercy seat in the heavenly sanctuary:

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate [Gk., Parakletos, one called alongside to help in time of need] with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

And he is the propitiation [Gk., hilasmos, (God appeased, through Christ’s work on the basis of His shed blood on the mercy seat)] for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world [contextually, a reference to ALL of the saved in the world, NOT the unsaved (a cleansing for Christians ALONE is in view; the unsaved and eternal salvation are NOT in view at all in these verses)]” (I John 2:1, 2).

Thus, the ones walking in the light in I John 1:7 are Christians who have availed themselves of the provision in I John 1:9.

As they continue walking in the light (*continue* availing themselves of this provision, allowing continued access to the Holy Place), the blood of Christ *continues* cleansing them from “*all sin.*”

And a Christian refusing to avail himself of provided cleansing today is seen walking in darkness. *He has NOT come to the laver* and, consequently, *can ONLY* remain in the darkened courtyard outside the light in the Holy Place. He has refused confession of sin; he has refused the cleansing provided by Christ.

And for such an individual, in reality, “there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.” That is, there *is NO sacrifice* for those refusing the sacrifice which God has provided in the person of His Son.

Thus, contextually (Heb. 10:19-22), one might think that the wilful sin in verse twenty-six (for which there *is NO sacrifice*) would be a Christian’s refusal to avail himself of Christ’s present high priestly ministry. In this respect, *there would be NO sacrifice for his unconfessed sins* (for a Christian refusing to confess his sins would be refusing the provided sacrifice).

But...

BUT, 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 *can ONLY 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 present. 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 result 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 “birthright” (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...”

(For additional information on the preceding, refer to the author’s book, *Let Us Go On*, Chapter V, “If They Shall Fall Away.”)

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 assemble together in order to exhort and encourage one another concerning 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 all Christians 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 during 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 an individual 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 sinning after this fashion 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 unbelieving 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.

The Sabbath was a *sign* pointing to a day of rest following God's present six days of work (Ex. 31:13-17). 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) 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 *ONLY through ONE means*:

They can do so through 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, according to Heb. 10:29, will have done three things:

- 1) He will have *trodden* “under foot the Son of God.”
- 2) He will have *considered the blood of Christ* “an unholy [‘a common’] thing.”
- 3) He will have *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, in His Word, 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 thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:30, 31).

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord [*WHEN, WHERE?* At the judgment seat, v. 10], we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences” (II Cor. 5:10, 11).

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.*