

BIBLE TRUTHS EXPLAINED

What the Bible Teaches About

SIN

Revised Edition, 2026

GORDON LYONS

ESV Edition

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Bible Truths Explained

Sin

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I must acknowledge a genuine debt of gratitude to the work of Dr. Charles Hodge. The writings of this theologian from a previous generation have helped considerably in preparing this work. On a number of occasions—as will be seen when reading these studies—I have cited or alluded to Dr. Hodge's remarks in his three-volume *Systematic Theology*. These references have been acknowledged in the footnotes to the study text.

Sin

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PART 1

Synopsis: Sin

Sinful thoughts and practices originate in mankind's corrupt mind (or heart). Sin is not only *deliberate* wrongdoing. All kind of wrongdoing is sin; including the failure to do the good that we ought to do. All coming short of God's righteous requirements or demands is sin. This includes failure to observe God's moral standards. It includes mistakes and errors. It includes deliberately transgressing (i.e. overstepping the bounds of) God's standard of righteousness. Sin also includes iniquity, or the wilful and deliberate practice of sin, or the practice of particularly evil or wicked acts. Again, sin includes lawlessness or disregard for both the civil law and God's law; and it includes unrighteousness or a general disregard for moral order or decency. All forms of sin incur guilt, making men justly liable to punishment. The penalty of sin is death—*spiritual, physical, and eternal* death. Excepting Christ alone, every human being is guilty of sin—in thought, attitude, word, and deed.

Note 1: No-One is Righteous

Sinful thoughts and sinful behaviour—which are common to all humanity—are part of man's fallen human nature. Because of the Fall, everyone has inherited from Adam a depraved (totally corrupted) and morally polluted nature. No one is righteous: not even one person. In saying that everyone is depraved or morally polluted by the Fall, this is not to imply that everyone is thoroughly sinful or as bad as it is possible to be. Clearly, this is not the case; nor does God's Word teach otherwise. Every one of us, however, has a polluted and sinful nature; and from that nature, and to varying degrees, everyone commits different sinful acts, they indulge in sinful thoughts, and they engage in sinful speech. Thus, everyone is unrighteous in God's eyes, and stands justly condemned by God's holy and righteous law.

Scripture References (ESV)

No-One is Righteous

Romans 3:10-18

¹⁰as it is written:

“None is righteous, no, not one;

¹¹ no one understands;

no one seeks for God.

¹²All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;

no one does good,

not even one.” {*Psalms 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Eccles. 7:20*}

¹³“Their throat is an open grave;

they use their tongues to deceive.”

“The venom of asps is under their lips.” {*Psalms 5:9; Psalm 140:3*}

¹⁴ “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.” {*Psalm 10:7*}

¹⁵“Their feet are swift to shed blood;

- ¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery,
¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known." {Isaiah 59:7,8}
¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes." {Psalm 36:1}

Mark 7:20-23

²⁰ And he [Jesus] said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

Note 2: Born in Sin

Everyone born into the world in the usual way (i.e. by natural procreation), is born with the guilt and pollution of original sin, and with an inherently corrupt nature. This is not to imply that there is anything sinful with natural relations, or with conception or birth. Clearly, these are God-given functions and gifts, to be used lovingly and honourably. When the Bible says that everyone is born in sin, it means that he or she has been born with a sinful nature and with an inward disposition or tendency to sin. This disposition to sin results from the fallen and corrupt nature that Adam transmitted to all humanity because of his sin and rebellion against God. God does not hold Adam and Eve's descendants personally responsible for their first parent's *actual* and *specific* sin. Nonetheless, all mankind shares in the penalty and consequences of that sin. The consequences includes the corruption of nature that their first parents brought upon themselves.

Scripture References (ESV)

Born in Sin

Genesis 8:21

²¹ And when the LORD smelt the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done.

Job 15:14

¹⁴ What is man, that he can be pure?
Or he who is born of a woman, that he can be righteous?

Psalms 51:5

⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Psalms 58:3

³ The wicked are estranged from the womb;
they go astray from birth, speaking lies.

Note 3: Under God's Wrath

Unless a person is regenerated (i.e. born again of God's Holy Spirit), and justified (or declared righteous), that person remains under the just condemnation of God. The wrath of God abides on him, together with the curse of the law. This is the penalty for that person's sin, and for the fact that he remains an enemy of God. He remains God's enemy because of his sin, and because of his rejection of—or failure to acknowledge—the truth, and to seek God's mercy. So long, therefore, as he remains alienated from God, and dead in trespasses and sins, that person remains under God's righteous wrath and judgment.

Scripture References (ESV)

Under God's Wrath

John 3:18

¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

John 3:36

³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Romans 1:18

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

Romans 2:5

⁵ But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgement will be revealed.

Note 4: No Forgiveness without Atonement

God will not forgive sin on the grounds of a person's (supposedly) good character or good works. God will forgive sin only on the grounds of the perfect character and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in virtue of his substitutionary and atoning sacrifice. Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin. Only a life lived in perfect obedience to God is acceptable to God. Christ lived that kind of life for all who would believe on him. The Lord Jesus thereby satisfied God's demands on his people for a life of perfect obedience to him. Only a perfect, unblemished life is acceptable to God as

an atoning sacrifice for sin. The Lord Jesus Christ had no sins of his own for which to atone. However, the holy Son of God voluntarily laid down his perfect, spotless life to make atonement for repentant and believing sinners.

Scripture References (ESV)

No Forgiveness without Atonement

Leviticus 17:11

¹¹ For the life of the flesh¹ is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.

Hebrews 9:22

²² Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

Romans 3:25

²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation² by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

1 Peter 1:18-19

¹⁸ knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold,
¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

¹ *flesh*: [Leviticus 17:11](#); Hebrew, *creature (human being)*, in this context)

² *propitiation*: [Romans 3:25](#); an *atoning sacrifice* for sin that fully satisfies the justice and righteousness of God. The ultimate sacrifice of atonement was that made by the Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God, on the cross at Calvary. Jesus died as a substitute for sinners. The shedding of his precious blood in his atoning sacrifice makes it possible for God to forgive sinners and reconcile them to himself. In the Old Testament, this was *typified* by the blood sprinkled on the mercy seat or atonement cover. In the New Testament, Christ's once-for-all sacrifice of atonement on the cross *actually* takes away all of the believer's sins forever. Christ's substitutionary sacrifice of atonement results in the believer's forgiveness, justification and redemption, and their full acceptance into the family of God's redeemed people as an heir of his kingdom and a joint-heir with Christ Jesus.

PART 2

Doctrine of Sin

Early Church Teaching

To determine how the early Church interpreted the two biblical doctrines of sin and salvation, we will consider the cardinal truths set forth by Augustine.³ We have set out the fundamental points below.

Augustinian Doctrine of Sin

1. We are each conscious of sin. We recognise ourselves as guilty and polluted. We are amenable to the justice of God, and we are offensive to God's holiness.
2. We are guilty and polluted, both because of our deliberate acts of transgression, and also because of sinful affections, feelings, and emotions. This sense of sin attaches not only to these positive and consciously active states of mind, but also to the mere absence of right affections. For example, hardness of heart; lack of love; lack of humility; lack of faith; or lack of any other Christian grace or virtue, is sin.
3. As far as consciousness extends, we recognise that we have always been sinners.
4. We are convinced that, of ourselves, we have no power to change our corrupt moral nature, or to make ourselves holy. Our liberty, or free will, gives us freedom in sinning, but it cannot give us the freedom to live righteously. We are slaves to sin, and to unrighteousness. The ability to live righteously—in a manner pleasing to God—comes only as a gift of God's grace.
5. We are conscious that sin is not a necessary act. Sin has its origin in the free will of man, and must therefore be voluntary. Sin is voluntary in that:
 - a) It has its origin in an act of the will;
 - b) It has its source in man's will;
 - c) It consists in the determination of the will to do evil.
6. All men show themselves to be sinners. Everyone gives evidence of sinfulness, as soon as they give evidence of reason. They not only appear as transgressors of God's law; they also appear as spiritually dead: devoid of all evidence of spiritual life. They are the willing slaves of sin—entirely unable to deliver themselves from their bondage to corruption.⁴

Augustinian Doctrine of Salvation

From the above, it follows that:

1. If men are to be saved, it cannot be by their own merit, but solely through the undeserved love of God.

³ *Augustine*: Augustine of Hippo (*Hippo* now known as *Annaba*, Algeria) in North Africa was converted to Christ around 386 AD. He became a well-known theologian and bishop of the North African church. His writings are still referred to extensively today.

⁴ This section based on C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology* Vol. 2 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977 reprint], pp.159-160.

2. Regeneration of the soul must be the exclusive, and supernatural, work of the Holy Spirit. The sinner can neither effect this work himself, nor co-operate in its production. In other words, grace is certainly efficacious or irresistible.
3. Salvation is of grace, or of the sovereign mercy of God:
 - a) In that God might justly have left men to perish in their apostasy, without any provision for their redemption.
 - b) In that men—being destitute of the power of doing anything holy or meritorious—their justification cannot be by works, but must be a matter of God's favour.
 - c) In that salvation depends—not on the will of the persons saved—but on the good pleasure of God. Only those whom God has called will be made partakers of the redemption of Christ. In other words, election to eternal life is founded on the sovereign pleasure of God, and not on the foresight of good works.
4. The perseverance of the saints is assured. Since God of his own good pleasure elects some to eternal life, they cannot fail of salvation. Once saved, they cannot be lost. ⁵

⁵ This section based on C. Hodge, *op. cit.* Vol. 2, pp.160-161.

PART 3

Essential Points Regarding Sin

From the time when the Church first began to formalise in written form the Bible's teaching about sin, it has maintained the following essential points:

1. In his or her present state of existence, everyone is a sinner.
2. The universal sinfulness of humanity originated, and was caused by, Adam's voluntary desertion (or apostasy) from God. By his sin, Adam fell from the state of righteousness in which God had created him. (The Fall of man.)
3. Fallen human nature is corrupted by sin and is totally unable to produce the standard of righteousness that God requires. No one, therefore, can merit or work for their salvation. A person can receive salvation only through repentance and faith in Christ. Godly repentance for sin, and genuine saving faith in Christ, results from the Holy Spirit's work in a person's life.
4. Even infants, when they are born, need subsequently to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit and redeemed by Christ's atoning blood. They, like anyone else, find salvation only through Christ's meritorious and substitutionary work.⁶

Original Sin

Since the fall of man, every person born into the world by natural procreation (i.e. everyone except Christ), has inherited Adam's sinful nature. We may express the effects of Adam's sin on all humanity as follows:

1. The guilt of his first sin, which affects not only Adam, but also all his descendants.
2. The loss of original righteousness (the morally and spiritually upright state in which God originally created Adam and Eve). Adam and Eve transmitted this loss to all their descendants; i.e. to the entire human race.
3. The corruption of our whole nature—rational, moral and spiritual.

Usually, we refer to this corruption of our whole nature (rational, moral, and spiritual) as *original sin*—but not always. Sometimes, the term, *original sin*, is understood to mean all three effects listed above, and not just the last mentioned. We refer to this inward corruption, in which everyone since the Fall is born, as original sin for the following reasons:

1. Because, by its very nature, it is actually and properly *sin*.
2. Because it proceeded from our first parents as the *origin* of our race.
3. Because it is the *origin* of all other sins and sinful tendencies—in thought, word and deed.

⁶ This section based on C. Hodge, *op. cit.* Vol. 2, pp.150-151.

4. Because, by its nature, *original sin* is distinguished from *actual sins*. Actual sins are sins that we ourselves commit.⁷

Reformed Teaching of Original Sin

According to the churches of the Reformation, which based their beliefs and principles on the teachings of the Bible, original sin is stated to be a corruption of nature derived from Adam. Statements supporting this declaration are:

1. That this corruption of nature affects the whole soul.
2. That it consists in the loss or absence of original righteousness, and consequent entire moral depravity of our nature. This moral depravity includes, or manifests itself by, a dislike for, and turning away from, all spiritual good—or from God—and an inclination toward all evil.
3. That, by its very nature, it is actually and properly sin; and as such, it involves both guilt and pollution.
4. That it retains its character as sin, even in those whom the Holy Spirit has regenerated.
5. That it makes the soul spiritually dead, so that the natural or unrenewed person is entirely unable of himself to do anything good in the sight of God.⁸

A ‘natural’ or unrenewed person is anyone who does not have the Spirit of God indwelling him or her. Such a person has never experienced the Holy Spirit’s regenerating and renewing power. This experience, however, is essential to salvation and eternal life.

In saying that a natural or unregenerate person is unable to do anything good in the sight of God, this does not mean that he is incapable of doing many good and commendable deeds. These deeds may win for him the approval and acclamation of the world. However, *in the sight of God*, they are totally worthless. A person who is alienated from God by sin, cannot commend himself to God by works of his own flawed righteousness. In God’s sight, all our righteous acts are like filthy rags. Thus, the Scripture says:

Isaiah 64:6-7

⁶ We have all become like one who is unclean,
and **all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.**

We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

⁷ There is no one who calls upon your name,
who rouses himself to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us,
and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities.

(bold emphasis added)

⁷ This section based on C. Hodge, *op. cit.* Vol. 2, p.227.

⁸ This section based on C. Hodge, *op. cit.* Vol. 2, pp.230-231.

Original Sin in Regard to Infants

Every child is born with the guilt and pollution of original sin, and with an inherently sinful nature. Children born to believing parents—or to at least one believing parent—are sanctified by their parent’s faith. However, it is still necessary, at a later stage, for each child to be born again (regenerated). This takes place through the operation of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and through their personal repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Concerning children born to believing parents, or to at least one believing parent, the Scripture says:

1 Corinthians 7:13-14

¹³ If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

No Infant or Child Will be Lost

It is the belief of this writer that no infant or child will ever perish. Should any child die before being capable of repenting and believing on Christ, they will be taken immediately into the presence of the Lord. The work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, together with the atoning blood of Christ shed on their behalf, ensures the redemption of every one of these children. Their (original) sin is forgiven—even although they have not been able personally to exercise saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.⁹

The same applies to every infant who dies before, or immediately after, birth. The Spirit of God regenerates them and takes them to be with the Lord. Again, God does not recognise a ‘foetal’ stage of development. To him, it is a living, developing infant. If he or she dies before birth, God accepts that unborn infant into the glory, joy, and happiness of his presence.

Someone may object that God receives all his *elect* children, whereas we have declared that God receives all infants and younger children, apparently indiscriminately. However, we must bear in mind that *God knew from eternity that these particular children would not survive their tender years*. Therefore, in view of these exceptional circumstances, it would be most unwise to assert that God did not elect every single one of these infants and children. And if God has elected all such infants and children, they will dwell in his presence forever.

Scripture References (ESV)

God’s Concern for Infants and Children

Concerning such infants, the Scripture says:

Matthew 18:1-4

¹ At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” ² And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them ³ and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become

⁹ This section based on C. Hodge, *op. cit.* Vol. 2, pp.245-246.

like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 18:5-6

⁵“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, ⁶but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

Matthew 18:10-11

¹⁰“See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.¹⁰

Let us remember that God appoints his angels to minister to those who are the heirs of salvation.

Matthew 18:12-14

¹²What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? ¹³And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. ¹⁴**So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.** (*bold emphasis added*)

Original Sin in Regard to Disabled Children and Adults

Again, it is the belief of this author that the same principle applies to those who—because of some learning disability, or some neurological or mental abnormality or other condition adversely affecting the brain or mind—are unable to understand the Gospel and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless their inability to respond to the call of the gospel through faith, God’s grace will ensure that his Holy Spirit will regenerate all his people. None of these, therefore, will ever perish.¹¹

¹⁰ [Matthew 18:10](#) Some manuscripts add verse [11](#): *For the Son of Man came to save the lost* (ESV footnote)

¹¹ See *Bible Truths Explained: Predestination*.

PART 4

Depravity of Mankind

All mankind is born with a corrupt sinful nature derived from Adam. The incarnate Son of God was the sole exception. The virgin Mary did not conceive Jesus by normal procreation, but by the power of the Holy Spirit. Adam's sinful nature was not transmitted to the Lord Jesus, nor was the guilt of original sin imputed or conveyed to him.

Apart from the Son of God, everyone without exception possesses this corrupt sinful nature. This applies to people from every stratum of society. It includes those who have been afforded the greatest privileges and the highest education. Equally, it includes those who have had to endure the severest deprivation, and who have had little meaningful education. Neither privileged position, nor the best education in the world, can ever make a person acceptable to God. Nor can the lack of these benefits in any way hinder a person from being brought into right relationship with God by the Holy Spirit's regenerating power, and through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The corrupt sinful nature applies not only to all classes of men and women, but also to all nationalities and to all cultures of men and women. Regardless of colour, creed, or any other distinguishing features, all men and women alike are sinners. If their heart is not right with God, the most outwardly religious people have absolutely no advantage over the most unrighteous and irreligious people. Both groups alike stand condemned.

This total depravity of mankind manifests itself to a greater or lesser extent by what people think, say, and do. All humanity has wilfully rebelled against God and every expression of men and women's sinful nature is a further evidence of his or her defiance and revolt.

Man's Heart is Wholly Corrupted by Sin

Scripture References (ESV)

Man's Heart is Wholly Corrupted by Sin

When we say that all mankind is totally depraved, we do not mean that everyone is equally wicked, or as bad as they can be. There are varying degrees of sin—in thought, word, and deed. However, everyone's heart is wholly corrupted and polluted by sin. It is from the heart that all evil thoughts, words and deeds proceed.¹² As the Scripture says:

Jeremiah 17:9

⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things,
and desperately sick; ¹³
who can understand it? (See v.10)

¹² This section based on C. Hodge, *op. cit.* Vol. 2, pp.233-234.

¹³ *sick*: [Jeremiah 17:9](#); Heb. *beyond cure*. KJV: *wicked*.

Mark 7:20-23

²⁰ And he [Jesus] said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him.
²¹ For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

Continually Evil from Childhood

Scripture References (ESV)

Continually Evil from Childhood

Concerning the total depravity of all mankind, the Scripture says:

Genesis 6:5

⁵ The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (See vv.1-8)

Genesis 6:11-13

¹¹ Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. ¹² And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh¹⁴ had corrupted their way on the earth. ¹³ And God said to Noah, “I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. (See Gen. 7:21-22)

Genesis 8:21a

^{21a} And when the Lord smelt the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth¹⁵... (See v.20)

Psalms 14:1-3

¹ The fool¹⁶ says in his heart, “There is no God.”
 They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds,
 there is none who does good.
² The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man,

¹⁴ *flesh*: [Genesis 6:12](#); Heb., בָּשָׂר, *bāśār*, [all] people.

¹⁵ *youth*: [Genesis 8:21](#); Heb., נְעוּרִים, *nē'ûrîm*: *childhood* or *youth*.

¹⁶ *fool*: [Psalms 14:1](#); Heb., *nābāl*, *lacking understanding*; pertaining to insolence, pride, and disobedience to God.

to see if there are any who understand,¹⁷
 who seek after God.

³They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt;
 there is none who does good,
 not even one. (Cf. Rom. 3:10-18)

Psalms 51:5

⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
 and in sin did my mother conceive me.

No-one is Righteous

Scripture References (ESV)

No-one is Righteous

Ecclesiastes 7:20

²⁰ Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never
 sins. (See v.29)

Isaiah 64:6

⁶ We have all become like one who is unclean,
 and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. [KJV, *filthy rags*]
 We all fade like a leaf,
 and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. (See v.7)

Romans 3:9-18

⁹ What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have
 already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, ¹⁰as it is
 written:

“None is righteous, no, not one;

¹¹ no one understands;

no one seeks for God.

¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;

no one does good,

not even one.” {*Psalms 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Eccles. 7:20*}

¹³ “Their throat is an open grave;

¹⁷ *understand*: [Psalm 14:2](#) Or *that act wisely*. (ESV footnote)

they use their tongues to deceive.”

“The venom of asps is under their lips.” {*Psalm 5:9; Psalm 140:3*}

¹⁴ “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.” {*Psalm 10:7*}

¹⁵ “Their feet are swift to shed blood;

¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery,

¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known.” {*Isaiah 59:7,8*}

¹⁸ “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” {*Psalm 36:1*}

Romans 3:19-20

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

Good Deeds Cannot Atone for Sin

Outside of Christ, and because of their sin, all humanity is abiding under God’s wrath and condemnation. (Rom. 1:18) If people are to be reconciled to God, God’s righteous wrath must be appeased by means of an atonement for sin. No amount of good deeds can ever make atonement for the sinful soul, nor can good works assist in the work of redemption. God reconciles to himself only those whom he redeems by the shed blood of the Lamb.¹⁸

Those only will enter God’s kingdom whose sins have been forgiven by Christ’s substitutionary and atoning sacrifice. Those only will become the children of God who experience the Holy Spirit’s power in regeneration. Such people, however, do not trust in their own good deeds or ‘righteous acts’. Rather, they trust wholeheartedly in the perfect righteousness of Christ, and in his finished work on their behalf.

¹⁸ *Lamb*: John the Baptist refers to the Lord Jesus as *The Lamb of God* (*John 1:29, 36*) since Jesus shed his blood to become the Atoning Sacrifice for sin for all time. Jesus, *The Lamb of God*, brought to an end all the animal sacrifices of lambs, etc.—especially, the Passover lamb—that had been required by God under the Old Testament or Old Covenant. (See also 1 Peter 1:18-19)

PART 5

Magnitude and Criminality of Sin

In the sight of God, all sins—from the least to the greatest—merit the same penalty. That penalty is death—spiritual, physical, and eternal death. Although not equally serious, or equally blameworthy, all sins without exception deserve everlasting punishment. Thus, God’s Word says:

Romans 6:23

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Cf. Gen. 2:17)

Galatians 6:7-8

⁷ Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

James 1:15

¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. (See vv.13-14)

The Bible constantly asserts that sin—all sin—is not only detestable to God, but is also the object of his holy wrath and righteous indignation. Any kind or degree of sin is the just ground for the sentence of eternal punishment. Thus, the Scripture says:

Ezekiel 18:4

⁴ Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die.

Ezekiel 18:20

²⁰ The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. (See vv.5-19, 21-32; cf. Ezek. 33:11-20)

Ephesians 2:1-3

¹ And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³among

whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. (See vv.4-9)

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

⁶ since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷ and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ¹⁰ when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

If, in a whole lifetime, a person were to commit only one sin, Christ would still have had to suffer and die for that sin. Again, if, in a whole lifetime, a person did not commit any sin, Christ would still have had to endure the cross for that person's *original sin*, and for their *sinful nature*. Herein lies the magnitude and criminality of even the most minor offences: our sin—original sin, sinful attitudes, sinful inclinations, and actual sins—resulted in the sufferings and death of God's one and only Son.

Concerning the fact that even one sin would have made necessary Christ's atoning death, the Scripture says:

Galatians 3:10

¹⁰ For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." {Deut. 27:26}

James 2:10

¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

God's Wrath Against Sin

Our sin resulted in God's righteous wrath being unleashed upon his only beloved Son. Christ endured the wrath of God in his own body on the tree. The sinless Saviour took our place. He suffered and died as our substitute so that we might be spared God's sustained and terrible anger being inflicted upon us in a lost and dreadful hell. To this end, the Scripture says:

Isaiah 53:4-6

⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,

smitten by God, and afflicted.

⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his stripes we are healed.

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all. (See vv.7-9)

Isaiah 53:10-11

¹⁰ Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him;
he has put him to grief;
when his soul makes an offering for guilt,
he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days;
the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

¹¹ Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied;
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,
make many to be accounted righteous,
and he shall bear their iniquities.

Isaiah 53:12

¹² Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,
because he poured out his soul to death
and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and makes intercession for the transgressors.

Romans 4:25

²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

1 Peter 2:24

²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin
and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

Never, then, can we account any sin as trivial, when we consider what that sin has done to a holy and innocent Victim. We stand on exactly the same ground as the most serious offender. By God's grace alone, we have been spared and forgiven. If, then, God can forgive *us* for causing the death of his only beloved Son, no one is beyond his saving grace and power. As the Scripture says:

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

1 Timothy 1:9

⁹understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers...
(See v.10)

PART 6

God Detests Sin

God, who is absolutely holy, is in no respect the author or approver of sin. In God's sight, all sin is reprehensible and worthy of the most severe punishment. Sin is not due merely to human inadequacies or shortcomings. It is a moral evil, resulting from, or involving, deliberate choices. For this reason, God justly condemns the person who chooses to commit sin. Sin, therefore, is not an affliction or failing for which an individual is to be either pitied or excused.

The following Scriptures exemplify that sin is detestable to God:

Habakkuk 1:13

¹³ You who are of purer eyes than to see evil
and cannot look at wrong,
why do you idly look at traitors
and remain silent when the wicked swallows up
the man more righteous than he? (See vv.12-17)

Deuteronomy 25:14-16

¹⁴ You shall not have in your house two kinds of measures, a large and a small. ¹⁵ A full and fair weight you shall have, a full and fair measure you shall have, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. ¹⁶ For all who do such things, all who act dishonestly, are an abomination to the LORD your God.

Psalms 10:3

³ For the wicked boasts of the desires of his soul,
and the one greedy for gain curses and renounces the LORD.

Luke 16:13-15

¹³ No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."

¹⁴ The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him. ¹⁵ And he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

Man's Free Will

At the creation, God gave man free will. It was, therefore, easy for man to choose the good and right, and to obey God—especially since, as yet, he had no experience of choosing evil.

At the Fall, however, man's free will was corrupted so that the inclination of his mind and will became permanently biased toward evil. From this point on, and because of fallen man's sinful inclinations, it became much easier for him to choose evil than to choose good. Indeed, because of the corruption of his moral nature, mankind often found it more desirable to choose evil.

So, although God gave mankind a free will, mankind now abuses or misuses his free will. Instead of choosing to honour their Creator and God, men and women now exercise their free will in the deliberate choice of sinful and godless living. However, although they may defiantly reject God—or carelessly neglect him—mankind is still responsible to God. God will hold every man and woman fully accountable for every sin they have committed—whether in thought, speech, or act.

Concerning the fact that fallen mankind's free will is biased continually toward evil, the Bible says:

Ecclesiastes 7:29

²⁹ See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes. (Cf. Rom. 1:30)

In his Word, God has given us his moral law, summarised in the Ten Commandments. (Exodus 20:1ff) He who is the Lawgiver will one day be the Judge. He will judge every secret thought, and every evil deed; and no one will escape the searching judgment of the Lord.

Responsible and Accountable to God

God Will Judge Every Thought, Word and Deed

Concerning the searching nature of God's judgment, the Scripture says:

Ecclesiastes 12:14

¹⁴ For God will bring every deed into judgement, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

Matthew 12:36-37

³⁶ I tell you, on the day of judgement people will give account for every careless word they speak, ³⁷ for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." (See vv.31-35)

Romans 2:16

¹⁶ on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. (See vv.1-12)

Clearly, then, man cannot say that he is not responsible for his actions in the sight of God, or that God cannot call him to account for these actions. Nor can he claim that God cannot judge him since he is

a fallen sinful creature by nature. When man sins, he chooses to sin. Every evil thought, word, and deed are conscious and deliberate exercises of his own corrupted free will. Mankind, therefore, remains fully responsible to God for his every thought, word, and action; and God will judge him according to his deeds.

PART 7

What Does God's Moral Law Demand?

Total and Willing Surrender to God's Will

God's moral law demands absolute and unwavering perfection of both our inward character and our outward or day-to-day conduct. It requires the entire conformity of our moral nature and behaviour, with the nature and will of God. This implies the unreserved consecration of all our abilities, talents and other faculties and endowments to God and to his service. It also implies an absolute submission of our mind and will to the mind and will of God, and to his purposes for us.

In pursuit of this entire dedication, God commands us to love him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and to love our neighbour as ourselves. Thus, to the scribe who asked Jesus which was the first commandment of all, it is written:

Mark 12:29-31

²⁹ Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord¹⁹ our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' {*Deut. 6:4,5*} ³¹ The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' {*Lev. 19:18*} There is no other commandment greater than these."

This is the essence of the moral law. This is the standard that God demands. Any falling short of this standard is a falling short of the glory of God—or of God's glorious ideal. Falling short of God's standard of absolute perfection is sin.²⁰ To this end, the Scripture says:

Romans 3:22b-23

^{22b} ... For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

James 2:8-10

⁸ If you really fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself", {*Lev. 19:18*} you are doing well. ⁹ But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as

¹⁹ *Lord*: [Mark 12:29-30](#); In Deuteronomy 6:4, from where Mark is quoting, the Hebrew rendering of 'Lord' is, יהוה **yhwh** (Yahweh). In the Old Testament, the sacred name, **yhwh**, is usually transliterated into English as 'LORD' (using all capital letters). The word, 'Lord', with an initial capital letter only, is an English translation of the Greek word, κύριος **kyrios**, meaning Lord or Master. This latter term is not specific to the Sovereign LORD God but can be used of any lord, master, superior or overseer among people in general.

²⁰ This paragraph based on C. Hodge, *op. cit.* Vol. 2, p.184.

transgressors. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. (See vv.1-13)

No Perfection in this Life

Thus, we can see that, in this life, perfection is unattainable. The moral law is so far-reaching that it declares all defects in any duty to be sin. For instance, all falling short of God's standards in purity of life, or in enthusiasm for the things of God, is a falling short of God's moral law. So, too, is all falling short of faithfulness of devotion and of holy affections. Similarly, all failing to do right, or failing to do the good we ought to do, is a falling short of the absolute perfection God demands. As such, it is sin.²¹

Thus, the Scripture says:

Luke 12:47

⁴⁷ And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. (See vv. 35-48)

James 4:17

¹⁷ So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

Although we have experienced the saving grace of God in redemption, we still fall very far short of the standard of God's moral law. Clearly, therefore, we will not experience perfection of character or of conduct in this life. While we remain in this life, we stand in the presence of God clothed with the perfect righteousness or perfection of Christ our Redeemer—not with any righteousness or perfection of our own.²²

Thus, God's Word says:

Philippians 3:9

⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— (See vv.4-11)

Philippians 3:12

¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. (See vv.13-15)

²¹ This paragraph based on C. Hodge, *op. cit.* Vol. 2, p.185.

²² See *Bible Truths Explained: Justification; Sanctification.*

PART 8

Sin Directed Against God

As stated on page 1, under the *Synopsis*, sin includes all forms of unintentional and deliberate wrongdoing. It also includes the failure to do right. Various forms of sin or sinful behaviour include failure, mistakes or error, as well as transgressions, trespasses, wickedness or unrighteousness. Directly or indirectly, sin is an expression of man's rebellion against God. Wittingly or unwittingly, consciously or subconsciously, therefore, when we sin, we sin against God.

Sin involves both guilt and pollution of the soul. It is a breaking of God's holy and righteous moral law, or any of its principles. Thus, God's Word says:

Romans 7:7-8

⁷What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." {*Exodus 20:17; Deut. 5:21*} ⁸But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. (See vv.9-11)

Romans 7:12-13

¹²So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

¹³Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. (See vv.14-25)

1 John 3:4

⁴Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practises lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.

1 John 5:17

¹⁷All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.

Sin Leads to Idolatry

Dethroning God for an Idol

Sin also involves dethroning God in our lives, and putting an idol in his place. Often, that idol is self. Pleasing self becomes more important than pleasing God. Instead of living our lives to God's honour

and glory, we live chiefly to fulfil selfish ambitions, or to gratify our sinful cravings and desires. Concerning these things, the Scripture says:

Ephesians 2:3

³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh,²³ carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. (See vv.1-5)

1 Timothy 6:6-12

⁶ Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, ⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. ⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

¹¹ But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (See vv.3-5)

James 4:1-4

¹ What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions²⁴ are at war within you? ² You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. ⁴ You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (See vv.5-17; cf. v.4 with 1 John 2:15-17)

²³ *flesh*: [Ephesians 2:3](#); Both the word 'flesh' and the word 'body' is translated from the same word in Greek: σάρξ **sarx**. In the context of this verse, 'sarx' (flesh/body) is referring to a person's sinful nature. From this sinful nature, flow sins of the body and sins of the mind.

²⁴ *passions*: [James 4:1](#); Greek, ἡδονή **hēdonē**, *pleasures* or *desires* – usually, of a sinful kind.

Live for God's Glory

Scripture References (ESV)

Live for God's Glory

Instead of living to please self, however, we should be living to please God—living to the praise of his glory—and to please others. As the Scripture says:

Romans 15:1-4

We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. ² Let each of us please his neighbour for his good, to build him up. ³ For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me." ⁴ For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (See vv.5-7)

1 Corinthians 10:23-24

²³ "All things are lawful", but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful", but not all things build up. ²⁴ Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbour. (See vv.14-33)

2 Corinthians 5:15

¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

Philippians 2:3-4

³ Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. (See vv.5-13)

2 Timothy 3:1-5

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ² For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. (See vv.6-9)

Idolising Another Person

Sometimes, our idol is another person. If we think more of another person than we do of the Lord our God, then that person is the true object of our devotion. He or she has become our false god.

These aspects of sin involve both selfishness and idolatry. Thus, concerning idolatry, God's Word says:

Ezekiel 14:1-6

¹ Then certain of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me. ² And the word of the LORD came to me: ³ "Son of man, these men have taken their idols into their hearts, and set the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces. Should I indeed let myself be consulted by them?

⁴ Therefore speak to them and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Any one of the house of Israel who takes his idols into his heart and sets the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and yet comes to the prophet, I the LORD will answer him as he comes with the multitude of his idols, ⁵ that I may lay hold of the hearts of the house of Israel, who are all estranged from me through their idols.

⁶ "Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: Repent and turn away from your idols, and turn away your faces from all your abominations.

To this end also, the Lord Jesus said:

Matthew 6:19-21

¹⁹ "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust²⁵ destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:24

²⁴ "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

Matthew 6:25

²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? (See vv.26-30)

²⁵ *rust*: [Matthew 6:19](#); Or *worm*; also verse [20](#). (ESV footnote)

Matthew 6:31-34

³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the Gentiles²⁶ seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

³⁴ "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

²⁶ *Gentiles*: [Matthew 6:32](#); Greek, ἔθνος **ethnos**, pagans, heathens, foreign nationals, or non-Jewish peoples.

PART 9

The Greatest Sin

Unbelief

In view of the fact that our sin caused the suffering and death of God's one and only Son, the greatest of all sins is to neglect or reject the holy Son of God. This is the sin of wilful unbelief. To disregard God's Son in this way is to disregard God and to incur everlasting punishment. In his great love and mercy, however, God has provided a way of escape from this just and eternal punishment. To this end, he has commanded all men everywhere to repent. As the Scripture says:

Acts 17:30-31

³⁰The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." (See vv.22-29)

Everyone who heeds God's command will find everlasting mercy and forgiveness. Anyone who refuses to seek God's mercy will perish. He or she has spurned the one and only way of salvation through faith in God's Son; and, by their rejection, they have treated with contempt the substitutionary and atoning sacrifice of Christ. To neglect or reject the Son of God after being the cause of his death, however, is the greatest of all sins. God will not hold those guiltless who treat as nothing the death of his only Son. This is why the wrath of God against unbelieving and impenitent sinners is so severe and enduring.

Unbelief Merits Condemnation

Scripture References (ESV)

Unbelief Merits Condemnation

Concerning the sin of unbelief, the Scripture says:

Matthew 10:14-15

¹⁴And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. ¹⁵Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgement for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town. (See vv.5-13)

Matthew 17:17-18

¹⁷And Jesus answered, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me." ¹⁸And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly. (See vv.14-21)

Hebrews 11:6

⁶And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. (See vv.1-40)

Believers Saved, Unbelievers Condemned

Scripture References (ESV)

Believers Saved, Unbelievers Condemned

Mark 16:15-16

¹⁵And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. ¹⁶Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. (See vv.17-20)

Luke 10:16

¹⁶"The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me." (See vv.1-15)

John 3:18

¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. (See vv.14-21)

John 3:36

³⁶Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. (See vv.31-35)

1 John 5:9-12

⁹If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. ¹⁰Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. ¹¹And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Revelation 21:6-8

⁶And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega,²⁷ the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. ⁷The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. ⁸But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death.” (See vv.1-5)

Unbelief Produces Hardness of Heart

Scripture References (ESV)

Unbelief Produces Hardness of Heart

Matthew 13:13-15

¹³This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:

“You will indeed hear but never understand,
and you will indeed see but never perceive.

¹⁵For this people's heart has grown dull,
and with their ears they can barely hear,
and their eyes they have closed,
lest they should see with their eyes
and hear with their ears
and understand with their heart
and turn, and I would heal them.’
{*Isaiah 6:9-10*} (See Matt. 13:10-17)

John 12:37-38

³⁷Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, ³⁸so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

“Lord, who has believed what he heard from us,
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” {*Isaiah 53:1*}

John 12:39-41

³⁹Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said,

⁴⁰“He has blinded their eyes
and hardened their heart,
lest they see with their eyes,

²⁷ *Alpha and Omega*: [Revelation 21:6](#); The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. The Lord Jesus is the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End – the Eternal Son of God.

and understand with their heart, and turn,
and I would heal them." *{Isaiah 6:8-10}*

⁴¹ Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.
(Cf. v.40 with Acts 28:24-28; Rom. 11:8)

Unbelievers Judged by God

Scripture References (ESV)

Unbelievers Judged by God

John 12:47-48

⁴⁷ If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I [Jesus] do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. ⁴⁸ The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. (See vv.44-50)

Romans 1:18

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. (See vv.16-22)

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

⁶ since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷ and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God²⁸ and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from²⁹ the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ¹⁰ when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

Hebrews 2:2-4

² For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ³ how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, ⁴ while God also bore

²⁸ *do not know God*: [2 Thessalonians 1:8](#); That is, those people who do not *acknowledge* God, or who refuse wilfully to recognise God as the living, Sovereign God and the ultimate Judge of all the earth.

²⁹ [2 Thessalonians 1:9](#) Or *destruction that comes from...* (ESV footnote)

witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

PART 10

The Unforgivable Sin

There is one sin that God will never forgive—either in this age, or in the age to come. This sin is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit—and it is known as the unforgivable or unpardonable sin.

What, however, does it mean to blaspheme the Holy Spirit?

To ‘blaspheme’ means to speak evil of someone, or to slander his or her name, character, or reputation. It is usually applied to speaking evil of God, or slandering God’s holy name. This may take the form of speaking vilely of God’s most holy name. Or, it may take the form of deliberately attempting to bring that name, character, or reputation into disrepute. Alternatively, it may take the form of wickedly and profanely associating God’s most holy name with any evil creature, evil thought, or evil act. To take an example from Scripture: the Pharisees spoke evil of the Lord Jesus—the Son of God—by attributing his works to the power of Satan. Thus, it is written:

Matthew 12:24

²⁴But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.”

This was wilful and malicious slander or blasphemy. These Pharisees knew very well that Jesus was working in the name of God, his Father. The authority Jesus exercised over mankind and demons was the authority that God had given him. The power of the Lord Jesus was nothing less than the omnipotence of Almighty God—operating through his Holy Spirit. However, the Jewish religious leaders would never admit to the truth of these things.

Scripture References (ESV)

The Unforgivable Sin

Concerning the unforgivable sin, the Scripture says:

Matthew 12:22-23

²²Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. ²³And all the people were amazed, and said, “Can this be the Son of David?”

The people were beginning to ask if Jesus could indeed be the son of David; i.e., the promised Messiah³⁰ of David’s line. This, however, alarmed the Pharisees. Consequently, they attempted to discredit the miraculous power and authority that identified Jesus as God’s Son and as the promised Messiah of David’s line. To this end, it is recorded of the Pharisees:

³⁰ *Messiah*: [Matthew 12:23](#); ‘Messiah’ (from Hebrew) and ‘Christ’ (from Greek) both mean *Saviour* or *Deliverer*.

Matthew 12:24

²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul,³¹ the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons." (Cf. Mark 3:20-22; Luke 11:14-16)

Here, the Pharisees were attributing to Satan the work of God's Holy Spirit. This comes perilously close to blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, because the Pharisees knew very well that Jesus was acting in the name of God and by the power of God's Holy Spirit. However, they would not openly admit it, attempting rather to convince the people that Jesus was working by Satan's power and authority.

Greater blasphemy than this can scarcely be imagined. Yet, the Lord Jesus promised forgiveness of all blasphemy against himself as the Son of Man, but not against the Holy Spirit. (Matt. 12:31; Mark 3:28, quoted below)

The Scripture continues by saying of the Pharisees:

Matthew 12:25-28

²⁵ Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. ²⁶ And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? ²⁷ And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. ²⁸ But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. (Cf. Mark 3:23-26; Luke 11:17-20)

Matthew 12:29-30

²⁹ Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house. ³⁰ Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. (Cf. Mark 3:27; Luke 11:21-23)

Blasphemy against The Holy Spirit

Scripture References (ESV)

Blasphemy against The Holy Spirit

The Lord Jesus issued this solemn warning to the Pharisees and other religious leaders:

Matthew 12:31-33

³¹ Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³² And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

³¹ *Beelzebul*: [Matthew 12:24](#); Greek, Βεελζεβούλ Beelzeboul, "lord [*baal*] of the flies". Beelzebub is originally a Philistine deity known as the "lord of flies," later associated with Satan and considered a prince of demons in the New Testament.

³³ “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. (See vv.34-37)

Mark 3:28-30

²⁸ “Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, ²⁹ but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin” — ³⁰ **for they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”** (*bold emphasis added*)

Luke 12:10

¹⁰ And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

All Other Kinds of Blasphemy can be Forgiven

Mark 3:28-29 and Luke 12:10 (quoted above) makes it abundantly plain that God, in his mercy, is willing to forgive all kinds of blasphemy against himself or his Son. The apostle Paul is a case in point. To this end, the apostle testifies:

1 Timothy 1:12-13

¹² I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, ¹³ though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, (See vv.14-16)

The Pharisees, however, were not merely speaking evil of God or of his Son. Certainly, this was a grievous sin, but it was not the unforgivable sin. Rather, the Pharisees were blaspheming God’s Holy Spirit. *They were attributing Jesus’ power to expel demons—not to the Holy Spirit—but to Satan.* In other words, they were saying that God’s Son was using satanic power. *To attribute the power of the Holy Spirit to Satan is to blaspheme God’s Holy Spirit.*

Again, the Pharisees were wilfully blaspheming or speaking evil of God’s Holy Spirit ***in the light of better knowledge***. Hence, because they knew better, and because they deliberately and maliciously attributed the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan, Jesus warned the Pharisees most severely about committing the unforgivable sin.

Who Can Commit the Unforgivable Sin?

Someone may ask, ‘Who can commit the unforgivable sin?’

Only those, who—like the Pharisees—possess a clear knowledge of God and of spiritual matters, and yet who wilfully and wickedly attribute the working of God, or of God’s Holy Spirit, to Satan.

We should note that—although the Pharisees possessed a knowledge of God—*this knowledge was only of an intellectual nature*. For all their learning, many of these religious leaders did not possess the kind of knowledge that led to repentance toward God and genuine saving faith in God’s one and only Son.

On the contrary, the vast majority of the Pharisees and other religious leaders showed themselves openly hostile to everything that the Lord Jesus said and did. It was to this kind of people that the Lord addressed these solemn words of warning about the unforgivable sin.

These people pretended to be very religious, and they wanted other people to believe that they were indeed pious believers in God. However, their words and their actions proved them to be hypocrites. They were intent in not only slandering God's name, but also in killing God's Son.

As the Scripture says:

Mark 3:6

⁶The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him. (See vv.1-5)

Many people become worried in case they should have been guilty of committing the unforgivable sin. Such people can be reassured. The kind of people who commit the unforgivable sin, do not show concern or anxiety. Like most of the Pharisees, their knowledge of God is merely an *intellectual or head* knowledge. *They are devoid of the Spirit and of spiritual insight or understanding.* Furthermore, such people have hardened their evil hearts against the things of God. They have become totally insensitive to spiritual matters.

This is a very different situation to those who experience a genuine concern over the possibility of committing the unforgivable sin. By their concern, they show that they are still sensitive to spiritual issues, that they have not therefore hardened their hearts against the things of God, and consequently that—whatever other sins they may have committed—they cannot have committed the unforgivable sin.

We should note, of course, that when Jesus issued this solemn warning, he was addressing *unregenerate individuals*; viz., those Pharisees and other religious leaders who did not have the Spirit of God within them. The Lord was not addressing his disciples or anyone else who had believed on his name.

It is not possible for any genuinely regenerate man or woman—in whom the Spirit of God dwells—to commit the unforgivable sin. Those Scriptures which may appear to suggest otherwise are referring not to genuinely regenerate men and women, but to those who profess to be regenerate individuals, but who are in fact false professors who have had no experience of the Holy Spirit's regenerating power in their lives. Such was Judas Iscariot. Such were the false teachers in the New Testament. Such too are those of whom Hebrews speaks when it warns against their trampling underfoot the blood of Christ.

None of these categories of people had ever been born again of God's Holy Spirit. However, many of them had professed to belong to Christ. Many of them had deceived others in the church by their false profession. Many of them had actually held offices within the church. Yet, none of these false professors ever knew what it was to be born of God's Holy Spirit. It is people such as these—very often to be found among the Lord's true people—that can commit the unforgivable sin, especially once they abandon their (false) profession or apostatise from the faith.

We will consider this in more detail in the section that follows.

PART 11

The Sin of Apostasy or Falling Away

No one whom the Holy Spirit has regenerated and whom God has justified can ever lose their salvation. Even so, it is possible for someone to claim allegiance to Christ, to follow his ways for a time, and yet to turn back to the ways of the world. This is because these people experienced only the *external* operations of the Holy Spirit. They did not experience, at any time, the *internal* and regenerating power of God's Holy Spirit.

In the case of such people, it is possible for them to fall away or apostatise from the faith; or, rather, from their (false) profession of faith. Judas Iscariot is a classic example of such a person. So, too, were the many 'disciples' who began to follow Jesus. Later, however, when his teaching became too difficult for them to accept, these same 'followers' abandoned the Lord and returned to the world. Such people were never true disciples.

This principle of false professions of faith, false discipleship, and subsequent desertion (or apostasy) from the faith, is clearly expounded in the parable of the sower.³² In expounding the parable of the sower, the Lord Jesus said:

Matthew 13:18-23

¹⁸ "Hear then the parable of the sower: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. ²⁰ As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, ²¹ yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. ²² As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. ²³ As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty." (See vv.3-8; cf. vv.24-30,37-43)

Backsliding is Not Apostasy

Those people who turn back permanently from following Christ, thereby prove that they were never truly regenerated believers. They were never truly the Lord's disciples. We should observe, however, that a person who is a true believer can backslide; i.e. he can turn aside temporarily from a godly, holy and pure way of life. While in a backslidden condition, that person might commit some very serious sins or greatly dishonour the Lord's name (as, for example, King David when he committed adultery, or the apostle Peter when he denied his Lord with oaths and curses).

Unlike, an apostate who wilfully cuts himself off from God's mercy and from the means of grace, however, a backslidden believer is conscious of his sins and convicted of those sins by the Holy Spirit. Eventually, he recognises his folly and acknowledges his sin to God. When he returns to the Lord in

³² See *Bible Truths Explained: Faith*, under *The Parable of The Sower*; and under *Falling Away From The Faith*.

true godly repentance, God restores him to his fellowship, immediately and completely. Once more, by God's super-abounding and forgiving grace, that person finds peace in his heart with God.

Backsliding, therefore, is not the same as apostasy. Apostasy is an utter and final renunciation of the faith, with absolutely no further interest in God, the church or in spiritual matters. Usually, an apostate will not experience any real sense of guilt for his sin. Nor does he experience the convicting power of God's Holy Spirit—except insofar as the Holy Spirit convicts and condemns all mankind of their sin and ungodliness. Again, an apostate refuses to recognise his folly in turning away from God, or to see the need of acknowledging his sin to God. He has finally abandoned God; and, very often, he will turn totally against God and against the church.

The Sin of Apostasy

Scripture References (ESV)

The Sin of Apostasy

The apostate was aware of the way of salvation, but he has renounced that way. He saw the light, but he did not accept the light. He knew the truth, but he refused to believe the truth. Thus, the writer to the Hebrews illustrates the outcome of such as abandon the light they had:

Hebrews 6:4-6

⁴For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

Hebrews 6:7-8

⁷For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. ⁸But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.

Yet, a final word of assurance is given to the true people of God:

Hebrews 6:9-11

⁹Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation. ¹⁰For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do. ¹¹And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, (See v.12)

True Believers Cannot Fall Away

Those who have been born from above by God's Holy Spirit, and in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, are sealed for eternity and sanctified by that Spirit. They cannot fall away or apostatise from the faith. Every truly born again believer is a member of God's elect: and the elect of God can never perish. To this end, the Scripture says:

John 10:27-30

²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one." (See vv.1-18,26)

Again, God's Word gives us this certain assurance:

Romans 8:28-30

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Romans 8:31-34

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. (Cf. v.32 with Rom. 3:24-26; 4:25; 5:8-11)

Separation from Christ is Impossible

Scripture References (ESV)

Separation from Christ is Impossible

It is impossible for anyone or anything to separate God's people from the love he has for them in Christ Jesus. Thus, the Scripture says:

Romans 8:35-39

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written,

"For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." {*Psalm 44:22*}

³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Chosen By The Father

Scripture References (ESV)

Chosen By The Father

Those whom God has chosen from before the creation of the world, cannot lose their salvation. For the Holy Spirit has sealed them unto the day of redemption. To this end, the apostle Paul says:

Ephesians 1:3-7

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption as sons³³ through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, (See vv.8-10)

Ephesians 1:11-12

¹¹In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹²so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

Sealed By The Holy Spirit

Scripture References (ESV)

Sealed By The Holy Spirit

Ephesians 1:13-14

¹³In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

³³ *adoption as sons*: [Ephesians 1:5](#); Greek, υιοθεσία **huiiothesia**, *sonship*. The concept of sonship includes both sons and daughters of God, both male and female adopted children of God.

To the same end, the apostle Peter says:

1 Peter 1:3-5

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (See vv.2-9)

False Professors Judged by God

These so-called 'believers', however, were not members of God's elect. Their apostasy is evidence of this. They have trodden underfoot the blood of Christ. Effectively, this means that they have despised the only way of redemption through faith in the sacrificial, substitutionary, and atoning work of Christ. Thus, the Scripture solemnly warns:

Hebrews 10:28-29

²⁸ Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?

Hebrews 10:30-31

³⁰ For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." {*Deut. 32:35*} And again, "The Lord will judge his people." {*Deut. 32:36; Psalm 135:14*} ³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (See vv.38,39)

In the first instance, the above passages may be understood as a very severe warning to the Lord's redeemed people in case they should ever become guilty of bringing the name of Christ into disrepute. Such an offence might be committed by a backslider who had sinned grievously against the Lord and who was coming perilously close to despising the Lord, the Holy Spirit and the means of grace. To prevent this from happening, the Lord warns most clearly that he will punish any such offenders, probably with death—as in the church at Corinth—in order to deal with their sin, to root out iniquity from his church, but at the same time to preserve the offender's soul for eternity. (Cf. 1 Cor. 11:26-32)

In the second instance, however, the principles contained in this passage could well be applied to false professors within God's church. Apart from the fact that they had never truly been included among the sanctified people of God (Heb. 10:28), every part of this warning would apply with full force to them. They had professed (falsely) to have been redeemed by Christ's blood, but in fact they had never experienced regeneration or sanctification. Although they knew what the Lord's atoning sacrifice signified and effected, they had trodden underfoot and despised the redeeming blood of Christ. From their experiences within the church as (false) professors of the faith, they knew that this blood sanctified God's people or set them apart as holy to the Lord. Yet, in their hearts, they repudiated both the Redeemer and his sacrifice of atonement. Consequently, by spurning the Saviour,

by making a false profession of faith, by deceiving God's people (the church) and by taking part outwardly in the means of grace, they were despising the Spirit of grace and treating God and his church with utter contempt. In their case, the vengeance of God would result in their eternal suffering in hell or the everlasting fire.

Not Everyone in the Church Belongs to Christ

These so-called 'believers' were *in* the church, but they were not *of* the church. They may have taken part regularly in the services of the church, but they did not do so with a regenerated heart. They may have served the Lord and taught the way of salvation to others. Yet, in the Day of Judgment, the Lord will say to them:

Luke 13:27

²⁷ But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!' (See vv.23-30)

Not all who name the name of Christ, belong to Christ. Not all who do many mighty miracles in his name, have entered into the kingdom of God. On the contrary, many who profess the name of Christ are lost; and lost they will remain for all eternity. For them, there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but only a fearful prospect of judgment.

Concerning such people, the Scripture says:

Matthew 7:21-23

²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' ²³ And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.' (See vv.15-20)

2 Timothy 2:19

¹⁹ But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his", and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."

Hebrews 10:26-27

²⁶ For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a fearful expectation of judgement, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. (See vv.28-31)

For the vast majority of people, however, a way of escape and forgiveness remains. The atoning sacrifice of Christ is fully effective to cleanse from all sin, and to reconcile to God the greatest sinner, or the vilest offender, who—by his grace—truly repents and believes the gospel.

PART 12

The Sinner's Substitute

Except for the sovereign grace of God, none of us would be spared from the just penalty of God's law. The wages of sin is death, and that penalty must be executed. If it is not to be executed upon the offender, then the wrath of God against sin must be executed upon the offender's sinless substitute. God has provided such a Substitute. Christ is the Lamb of God, slain from before the creation of the world for the sins of his people. Thus, the Scripture says:

Revelation 5:9-10

⁹ And they sang a new song, saying,
 "Worthy are you to take the scroll
 and to open its seals,
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God
 from every tribe and language and people and nation,
¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
 and they shall reign on the earth." (See vv.1-14) (*bold emphasis added*)

Revelation 13:8

⁸ and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of **the Lamb who was slain**. (See vv.1-10) (*bold emphasis added*)

Christ, Our Atoning Sacrifice

Scripture References (ESV)

Christ, Our Atoning Sacrifice

Christ alone is the propitiation—the acceptable satisfaction—for our sins. Thus, God's Word says:

Romans 3:24-26

²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation³⁴ by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (See vv.19-23)

1 John 2:2

³⁴ *propitiation*: **Romans 3:25**; Greek, ἱλαστήριον **hilastērion**, *sacrifice of atonement*. Atoning sacrifice; the place where sins are forgiven; traditionally propitiation or mercy seat. (See more detailed explanation on page 4, footnote 2, of this study.)

² He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. (See v.1)

The Lord Jesus is the only way by which a man or a woman can escape the just wrath of God upon sin, and against the unrepentant sinner. Concerning this, the Scripture says:

Romans 5:8-10

⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. (See vv.6-11)

Christ Delivers Us From God's Wrath

Scripture References (ESV)

Christ Delivers Us From God's Wrath

Romans 8:1

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.³⁵

1 Thessalonians 1:10

¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. (See vv.4-9)

1 Thessalonians 5:9-10

⁹ For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. (See vv.1-11)

All Whom God Calls Will Come

Scripture References (ESV)

All Whom God Calls Will Come

All who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved—and there are no exceptions. No one can come to Christ for forgiveness, unless the Father in heaven draws him. However, no one whom the Holy Spirit thus enables to come to Christ, will ever be turned away. As the Scripture says:

³⁵ [Romans 8:1](#) Some manuscripts add *who walk not according to the flesh (but according to the Spirit)* (ESV footnote)

John 6:37

³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. (See vv.22-40)

John 6:44-45

⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' {*Isaiah 54:13; Jer. 31:34*} Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me— (See vv.41-51)

John 6:63-66

⁶³ It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ⁶⁴ But there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) ⁶⁵ And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."

⁶⁶ After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. (See vv.67-71)

Everyone Who Calls, Will be Saved

Scripture References (ESV)

Everyone Who Calls, Will be Saved

Romans 10:4-10

⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.³⁶

⁵ For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. {*Lev. 18:5*} ⁶ But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" {*Deut. 30:12*} (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷ or "'Who will descend into the abyss?'" {*Deut. 30:13*} (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" {*Deut. 30:14*} (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹ because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. (See vv.1-3)

³⁶ [Romans 10:4](#) Or end of the law, that everyone who believes may be justified. (ESV footnote)

Romans 10:11-13

¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." {*Isaiah 28:16; Rom. 9:33*} ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." {*Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21*} (See Rom. 10:14-17)

