Sinning Willfully

**By Arlen Chitwood**

Christ provided Himself as the Sacrifice for sin, His blood is today on the mercy seat in heaven, and He is presently occupying the office of High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary on behalf of sinning Christians. Christ is presently performing a cleansing from defilement for Christians who sin, and all a Christian needs to do in order to avail himself of this provided cleansing is to confess his sin. When he does this, cleansing will occur (1 John 1:9).

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

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

For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, (Hebrews 10:26)

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

1) Christ’s Present Ministry

To properly understand the willful sin, for several reasons (one reason being contextual), it should be viewed, first of all, in the light of Christ’s present high priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. Note the context of Hebrews 10:26 (Hebrews 10:19-22) and also 1 John 1:6-2:2. The “blood” of Christ is presently on the mercy seat in the “holiest [Holy of Holies]” of the heavenly sanctuary; and a “new and living way” of access has been provided through the One who shed this blood, our “High Priest over the house of God.”

The blood of Christ, presently on the mercy seat of the heavenly sanctuary, “cleanses [keeps on cleansing]” Christians who have become defiled (through sin) as they “walk [keep on walking] in the light” (1 John 1:7; cf. Hebrews 10:22). It is impossible for the ones walking in the light to occupy a position other than being cleansed from sin; but, viewing the other side of the picture, it is entirely possible for Christians to not walk in the light, in which case there will be no cleansing.

To understand exactly what is meant by walking in the light, one must draw from the typology of the tabernacle. The light was provided by a seven-leafed golden candlestick inside the Holy Place where the priests carried on part of their ministry, and the only way that these priests were permitted to enter the Holy Place and walk in this light was through a previous cleansing at the brazen laver (basin) in the courtyard.

This laver lay between the brazen altar and the Holy Place and had upper and lower basins for washing the hands and feet. The entire bodies of these priests had been washed upon their entrance into the priesthood (Exodus 29:4; 40:12-15) — an act never to be repeated — but in their subsequent ministry, it was necessary to avail themselves of partial washings (washings of parts of the body) at the laver. Their hands and feet became soiled in their ministry, and these parts of the body had to be cleansed prior to entering the Holy Place (Exodus 30:18-21; 40:30-32).

Exactly the same thing holds true for Christians, New Testament priests, in the antitype today. Christians have received a complete washing (received at the point of the birth from above, upon their entrance into the priesthood) — an act never to be repeated. But, as the Old Testament priests, they must now avail themselves of partial washings in their ministry. And this is seen in the type by and through the actions of Old Testament priests washing at the laver.

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

If I do not wash [Greek: nipto, referring to a part of the body (the Septuagint uses this same word in Exodus 30:19, 21)] you, you have no part with me [note: not ‘in me,’ but ‘with me’]”; and “He who is washed [Greek: louo, (‘bathed’ in the NKJV) referring to the entire body (the Septuagint uses this same word in Exodus 29:4; 40:12)] needs only to wash [Greek: nipto] his feet . . . .

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

Old Testament priests whose hands and feet had become soiled through activity in the courtyard could not bypass the laver and proceed on to the Holy Place. Nor can New Testament priests. New Testament priests must first, as the Old Testament priests, avail themselves of cleansing. Defilement in the Christians’ case comes through contact with sin; and cleansing, according to the context of 1 John 1:7, is accomplished through confession of sin:

If we confess our sins, He [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

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

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate [Greek: parakletos, one called alongside to help in time of need] with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

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

Thus, the ones walking in the light in 1 John 1:7 are Christians who have availed themselves of the provision in 1 John 1:9. As they continue walking in the light (continue availing themselves of this provision, allowing continued access to the Holy Place), the blood of Christ continues cleansing them from “all sin.”

And a Christian refusing to avail himself of provided cleansing today is seen walking in darkness. He has not come to the laver and, consequently, can only remain in the darkened courtyard outside the light in the Holy Place. He has refused confession of sin; he has refused the cleansing provided by Christ. And for such an individual, in reality, “there remains no more sacrifice for sins.” That is, there is no sacrifice for those refusing the sacrifice that God has provided in the person of His Son.

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

2) BUT. . . .

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

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

The only possible way to properly understand the willful sin in Hebrews 10:26, for which there is no sacrifice, is to view this sin, contextually, within the book of Hebrews where it is found. If this is not done, a person will invariably go wrong at this point in Scripture.

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

In both the type (Hebrews 3; 4 [second warning]) and the antitype (Hebrews 6:4ff [third warning]), the sin referenced in the fourth warning (Hebrews 10:26ff) is present. The Israelites under Moses committed a sin for which there was no sacrifice (second warning [(Hebrews 3; 4)]), and Christians today can commit exactly the same sin, with the same result following (third warning [Hebrews 6:4ff]). Then the fourth warning (Hebrews 10:26ff) continues with thoughts pertaining to this sin; and the matter has to do with “so great a salvation” (Hebrews 2 [first warning]), resulting in “blessing” associated with the “birthright” (Hebrews 12 [fifth warning]).

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

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

This is plain from that which is stated in Hebrews 6:2-4, again drawing from the type in Hebrews 3; 4, the account of the Israelites under Moses:

For it is impossible . . . if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance . . . .”

(For additional information on the preceding, refer to the author’s book, [Bible One - Arlen Chitwood's Let Us Go On, Ch. 4, Leaving the Principles](http://bibleone.net/LUGO_04.htm) and [Ch. 5, If They Shall Fall Away](http://bibleone.net/LUGO_05.htm).)

Then note that the reference to this sin is the continuation of a text having to do with a central purpose for Christians assembling together during the present dispensation — whether on Sunday at a regular meeting place, or at any other time or place during the week (Hebrews10:23-25). The particular purpose given in the text is singular: Christians meeting together in order to exhort and encourage one another concerning the hope set before each one of them (“profession of our faith” [Hebrews10:23, KJV] should be translated, “confession of our hope”). And this hope set before every Christian is the hope that they might one day realize the very thing to which they have been called — win a crown in the present race of the faith and, as a result, occupy a regal position with Christ in that coming day of His power.

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

The willful sin, simply put, has to do with apostasy, after one has come into a mature knowledge of the things surrounding the hope set before Christians — something seen in the type in the second warning (Hebrews 3; 4) and in the antitype in the third warning (Hebrews 6:4ff). And sinning after this fashion will result in a Christian failing to come into possession of so great salvation (first warning [Hebrews 2]), synonymous with failing to realize the rights of the firstborn (fifth warning [Hebrews 12]).

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

God’s statement concerning a sin for which there was no sacrifice in this passage had to do with a person acting in open rebellion, followed by his being cut off from the people of Israel (which was exactly what occurred at and following the events at Kadesh-Barnea). And the contextual example not only had to do with the experiences of the Israelites, beginning at Kadesh-Barnea (Numbers 13; 14), but it also had to do with a man violating the Sabbath (Numbers 15:32-36).

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

The land set before Christians is associated with a rest, a Sabbath rest, drawing from Genesis 2:1-3 (Hebrews 4:4-9). And a Christian turning his back on this land (after coming into a mature knowledge of the things surrounding the land) would be doing exactly the same thing that the Israelites under Moses did at Kadesh-Barnea (after hearing the report concerning the land by the twelve spies). Then, in another respect, such a Christian would be doing violence to that which God had to say about the Sabbath rest set before the people of God, in a similar respect to the man violating the Sabbath in Numbers 15:32-36 (for the Sabbath was given Israel as a sign [Exodus 31:13-17]).

The Sabbath was a sign pointing to a day of rest following God’s present six days of work (Exodus 31:13-17). As God rested on the seventh day after working six days to restore a past ruined creation (the material creation) — establishing an unchangeable, foundational pattern — He is going to rest on a seventh day (a 1,000-year day) after working six days (six 6,000-year days) to restore two present ruined creations (both man and the material creation once again).

Thus, drawing from both Numbers 13; 15 and Hebrews 3; 4; 6, it can easily be shown how Christians, in Hebrews 10:26ff, can sin willfully today. They can do so by and through only one means:

coming into a mature knowledge of the truth surrounding their calling, and then apostatizing (turning away from this truth).

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

1) Trodden “under foot the Son of God.”

2) Considered the blood of Christ “an unholy [a common] thing.”

3) Insulted “the Spirit of grace.”

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

a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. (Hebrews 10:27)

Then note how verses thirty and thirty-one of Hebrews chapter ten (Hebrews 10:30-31) parallel 2 Corinthians 5:10-11:

For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The Lord shall judge His people.”

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

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

Excerpted from [Bible One - Arlen Chitwood's Judgment Seat of Christ, Ch 3, That Every One May Receive](http://bibleone.net/JSC03.htm).

(For additional information on the warning passages see [The Five Warning Passages in Hebrews](http://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-also-too.php#The Five Warning Passages in Hebrews) in this site.)