

## THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST

Commissioner S. L. Brengle

God is love, and the Holy Spirit is ceaselessly striving to make this love known in our hearts, to work out God's purposes of love in our lives, and transform and transfigure our characters by love. And we are solemnly warned against resisting the Spirit, and almost tearfully and always tenderly exhorted to "quench not the Spirit," and to "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby," says the Apostle, "ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

There is one great sin against which Jesus warned the Jews, as a sin never to be forgiven in this world nor in that which is to come. That was blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

That there is such a sin, Jesus teaches in Matthew 12:31, 32, Mark 3:28-30, and Luke 12:10. And it may be that this is the sin referred to in Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:29.

Since many of God's dear children have fallen into dreadful distress through fear that they had committed this sin, it may be helpful for us to study carefully as to what constitutes it.

Jesus was casting out devils, and Mark tells us that "the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth He out devils." To this Jesus replied with gracious kindness and searching logic: "How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, it cannot stand. And if Satan rise up against himself and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. No man can enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house."

In this quiet reply we see that Jesus does not rail against them, nor flatly deny their base assertion that He does His miracles by the power of the devil but shows how logically false must be their statement. And then, with grave authority, and, I think, with solemn tenderness in His voice and in His eyes, He adds, "Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation"; or, as the Revised Version puts it, "is guilty of an eternal sin"; and then Mark adds, "because they said, He hath an unclean spirit" (Mark 3:22-30).

Jesus came into the world to reveal God's truth and love to men, and to save them, and men are saved by believing in Him. But how could the men of His day, who saw Him working at the carpenter's bench, and living the life of an ordinary man of humble toil and daily temptation and trial, believe His stupendous claim to be the only-begotten Son of God, the Saviour of the world, and the final Judge of all men? Any wilful and proud impostor could make such a claim. But men could not and ought not to believe such an assertion unless the claim were supported by ungainsayable evidence. This evidence Jesus began to give, not only in the holy life which He lived and the pure Gospel He preached, but in the miracles He wrought, the blind eyes He opened, the sick He healed, the hungry thousands He fed, the seas He stilled, the dead He raised to life again, and the devils He cast out of bound and harassed souls.

The scribes and Pharisees witnessed these miracles, and were compelled to admit these signs and wonders. Nicodemus, one of their number, said to Jesus, "Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2). Would they now admit His claim to be the Son of God, their promised and long-looked-for Messiah? They were thoughtful men and very religious, but not spiritual. The Gospel He preached was Spirit and life: it appealed to their conscience and revealed their sin, and to acknowledge Him was to admit that they themselves were wrong. It meant submission to His authority, the surrender of their wills, and a change of front in their whole inner and outer life. This meant moral and spiritual revolution in each man's heart and life, and to this they would not submit. And so to avoid such plain inconsistency, they must discredit His miracles; and since they could not deny them, they declared that He wrought them by the power of the devil.

Jesus worked these signs and wonders by the power of the Holy Spirit that He might win their confidence, and that they might reasonably believe and be saved. But they refused to believe, and in their malignant obstinacy heaped scorn upon Him, accusing Him of being in league with the devil; and how could they be saved? This was the sin against the Holy Spirit against which Jesus warned them. It was not so much one act of sin, as a deep-seated, stubborn rebellion against God that led them to choose darkness rather than light, and so to blaspheme against the Spirit of truth and light. It was sin full and ripe and ready for the harvest.

Many of God's dear children, honest souls, have been persuaded that they have committed this awful sin. Indeed, I once thought that I myself had done so, and for twenty-eight days I felt that, like Jonah, I was "in the belly of hell." But God, in love and tender mercy, drew me out of the horrible pit of doubt and fear, and showed me that this is a sin committed only by those who, in spite of all evidence, harden their hearts in unbelief, and to shield themselves in their sins deny and blaspheme the Lord.

Doubtless many through resistance to the Holy Spirit come to this awful state of heart; but those troubled, anxious souls who think they have committed this sin are not usually among the number.

In one meeting I have known three people who thought they had committed this sin, and were bowed with grief and fear, to come to the penitent-form and find deliverance.

The poet Cowper was plunged into unutterable gloom by the conviction that he had committed this awful sin; but God tenderly brought him into the light and sweet comforts of the Holy Spirit again.

John Bunyan was also afflicted with horrible fears that he had committed the unpardonable sin, and in his little book, entitled "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners" (a book which I would earnestly recommend to all soul-winners), he tells how he was delivered from his doubts and fears and was filled once more with the joy of the Lord.

Those who think they have committed this sin may generally be assured that they have not. Their hearts are usually very tender, while this sin must harden the heart past all feeling.

## NO DEPTH OF EARTH

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mere things? Are you willing to be a living sacrifice for Jesus sake? May the Holy Spirit search us all with these questions.

Shallowness again comes from failure to separate from the world. Lives are weak and powerless, testimonies pale, Christian experiences unsatisfactory because people are overlooking the plain teaching of the Word of God on separation. This Bible principle runs deep in the tenor of all scripture, both Old and New Testaments. It is not always easy to apply—especially in youth. But those who heed the call hear the promise "... and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters," II Corinthians 6:14-18.

Putting it another way shallowness comes from ignorance and lack of the Holy Spirit dwelling within. No one can be spiritual unless he possesses the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit possesses him. Many are placing a new emphasis upon the office work and ministry of the Holy Spirit today who have not done so before. This is an encouraging thing. It is essential to depth in God.

Is your life typical of this sickening shallowness? Have you been a dead pan in the Y. P. S.? in all of the Lord's work in fact? You had better ask God to break up your stony heart. Better do some fasting and praying. Deliberately deny yourself the easy way. Pray until a living force comes into your bosom. Pray until the glory of God breaks upon your soul, until you are filled with a compassion for the lost, until waves of peace come over you. Pray for the Holy Spirit to possess your whole being. Pray lest there be no depth of earth in you and you wither away.

—H. K. Sheets, in Wesleyan Youth.

## THANKSGIVING ALWAYS

In approaching God we should never forget to return thanks for blessings already granted. If any one of us would stop and think how many of the prayers which we have offered to God have been answered, and how seldom we have gone back to God to return thanks for the answers thus given, I am sure we should be overwhelmed with confusion.

—Dr. R. A. Torrey.

## WEDDING

Tidd — Wilcox

Miss Hazel Wilcox and Mr. Sherwood Tidd, both of Black's Harbour, N. B., were united in marriage at the parsonage of the Reformed Baptist Church on July 25, 1952, with the pastor, Rev. W. Fernley officiating.

They are full of sorrow and shame for having neglected God's grace and trifled with the Saviour's dying love, but such sorrow could not exist in a heart so fully given over to sin that pardon was impossible. God says, "Whosoever will may come"; and if they find it in their hearts to come, they will not be cast out, but freely pardoned and received with loving-kindness through the merits of Jesus' Blood. God's promise will not fail. His faithfulness is established in the heavens. Bless His holy name! Those who have committed this sin are full of evil, and do not care to come, and will not, and, therefore, are never pardoned. Their sin is eternal. Abridged from—When the Holy Ghost is Come.