

THE SIN OF UNBELIEF

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Christians often argue about what is the greatest sin in the eyes of God. I guess they like to do this for reasons that are beyond me because the Bible is clear that all judgment is reserved for Jesus yet it seems that man has a tendency to want to justify our own sins by declaring that the worst sin is homosexuality, fornication, idolatry or something else—but normally not something that we ourselves are guilty of.

Now it is equally clear from the Scriptures that some sins are worse than others because—like Heaven where a person resides according to their works on the earth (people only get to Heaven today through the Blood of Jesus but where you live there is determined by your works while on the earth)—those who die and go to hell reside there according to how heinous their sins were—some parts of hell are much, much worse than others.

But I want to make a statement now that may rattle your chain because it applies to unbelievers and Christians alike—the greatest sin and the only unforgivable sin is the sin of unbelief! Now don't misunderstand me. There is a big difference between an unbeliever and a born-again believer in Jesus Christ. At death unbelievers go to

hell whereas believers go to Heaven but this has to do with the Blood of Jesus and sin, i.e., the sin of unbelief when it comes to salvation.

However, let's not have "Baptist minds" when it comes to faith. I should know; I was ordained as a Southern Baptist pastor years ago and I've found that many if not most Baptists today still suffer from the same mindset that I had as a 22 year old Southern Baptist pastor in Corpus Christi, Texas—whenever I heard the word "faith" I only thought of saving faith. In other words, the word "faith" to me was synonymous with salvation. Why? Because we were not taught about faith—just *the* faith. Yet the Bible teaches that "faith is a substance" in Hebrews 11 and so we must learn that just like there are physical substances such as air, water, fire, etc., so are there also spiritual substances such as faith, grace, *zoe* (eternal life), etc.

So for this teaching let's consider the following powerful verse of the Scriptures as our key text:

"But he who doubts is condemned ...

for whatever is not from faith is sin." Ω Romans 14:23

Now don't forget that Paul is writing this letter to believers so we know that when he uses the word "condemned" it can't possibly mean that they are going to hell so what does it mean? Well, you should probably go back to the beginning of Chapter 14 when the Apostle Paul begins this subject regarding the contrast between "one who is weak in the faith" from those who are strong or more mature in their understanding of faith. The whole train of thought here in Chapter 14 is quite instructive because in addition to the subject we are discussing in this teaching article, it also speaks to the controversy in the Church over whether we should worship the Lord on the Sabbath (Saturday) or on what the New Testament calls "the Lord's Day" which is Sunday.

The fact is my brother and sister that the word “condemned” in Romans 14 has to do with the fact that the sin of unbelief leads to condemnation because it is contrary to faith—unbelief destroys faith. Let me give you an example from our own ministry. Back in the mid ‘90s Eve and I had just moved to Montana and we received a phone call from a man in Portland, Oregon, who had just been given a sentence by his doctors of 5 days to live! He had a rare form of blood cancer that was destroying his kidneys. He said that he had heard of our ministry through Lakewood Church in Houston—that we had 100% in praying against cancer—and he asked us to fly over and pray for him. Now at the time we had no money in the bank and could not afford the plane fare over there BUT as I’ve written in articles on here before and we’ve preached to our churches both here and in Africa—don’t ever make a decision based on finances! The first question you must ask is not: “Can I afford it?” (Because we don’t operate our ministry based on money; after all, we could have said: “Sure, we’ll come if you will pay our air fare and give us a nice hotel room plus \$500 a day for our time.” Right? The Bible says that a servant is worthy of his time. We will speak about this later but the fact is that money has nothing whatsoever to do with ministry! Sure it costs money to operate a ministry but that’s God’s problem. The Lord showed me many, many years ago this fact: *if* it’s the will of the Lord for me to do something then what does money have to do with it? The real question is not—“Can I afford it?” The real question is: “Am I going to be obedient to the Spirit of the Lord?” And if the Lord wants you to go then you go!)

So we knew that if we did not go pray for this man that his blood would be on our hands. And yet I knew in my spirit that I could have just spoken the Word over him on the phone and he would have been healed. Again, that’s why it’s important for you to learn from this teaching that you must pray into these type decisions if you want to determine the perfect will of God—remember there are 3 wills of God.

Sure, we would have saved \$2,000 in expenses had I simply spoken the Word over him on the phone but the Lord would not have been able to touch other lives and “reveal hearts” had we not gone to Portland the next day.

When we arrived at his house from the airport he looked bad—really bad—as if he would die in a few hours. On Sunday morning I was the first one up and as I was lying on their living room floor praying for this man and his family the Lord walked into the room and He walked over to me as I lay on the floor and He said: “If his faith doesn’t fail I will heal him.” Now isn’t that interesting? What the Lord said also shows how we have so failed to understand the Scriptures when we say things like: “It’s always the Lord’s will to heal” or “Jesus still heals today” or similar things.

The Scriptures paint a slightly different view and one that we should understand. Let’s look at an important scripture from the chapter in the Bible that I’ve perhaps learned more from than any other—2 Kings 5.

**“And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying,
‘Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and
Your flesh shall be restored to you, and
You shall be clean.” Ω 2 Kings 5:10**

Now let me ask you some questions: Was it the will of the Lord for Naaman to be healed of his leprosy? Was the Lord able to heal him? As you read this chapter, what *additional* facts do you learn to see that the Lord accomplished much more than just the healing of one man? Were hearts revealed? (always a purpose of the Lord, *cf.* Luke 2:34-35) But let me ask one additional question: Would Naaman have been healed if he had followed his own counsel and dipped in the rivers of

Damascus (Abanah and Pharpar) because they were more pristine and not muddy like the River Jordan?

Naaman's heart was revealed wasn't it? We see his pride, etc. clearly revealed in the words penned by the Spirit in 2 Kings 5. First his pride was revealed when Elisha didn't even come to meet him; instead Elisha sent a servant—one of the Sons of the Prophets—didn't he? Wonder why Elisha did that? Can you see it? Because he prayed into the will of the Lord and he followed the Spirit of God to not only heal a man of a life shortening, incurable disease but also deal with the man's pride and also his salvation—Naaman became “saved” through this encounter. So remember, always pray through and “into” the circumstances of the people God sends to you for ministry. That way the perfect will of the Lord will be done and God can minister to the whole person and not just a physical ailment like Naaman or Ron the man from Portland had.

Now before we leave 2 Kings 5 the Lord wants me to discuss another “heart revealed” through Naaman's trip to Dothan in Israel. That heart is the heart of Elisha's servant, Gehazi, who was one of the Sons of the Prophets in training under Elisha and next in line to inherit Elisha's mantle that he had inherited from Elijah. Gehazi lost his ministry and his health as a result of his wicked heart of sin being revealed and dealt with.

His master, Elisha, had refused to accept all the wealth (about \$10 million in gold and silver) that this Syrian (hated by the Jews) Naaman had brought as a “gift” for his being healed. Even though Naaman begged Elisha to accept something Elisha was resolute: “As the LORD lives, before whom I stand, I will receive nothing.” Why did Elisha say that? The Lord revealed this whole thing to me in December, 1989, while I was preaching a message on a Sunday night at a church in Akure, Nigeria! While I was preaching! I thought “How many ministries today would turn down a gift of \$10 million? No doubt they would find

some way to rationalize receiving it, right?” But then the Lord told me why Elisha had turned it down—because he had already been instructed by the Lord not to receive anything! And we can also see this from the Scriptures themselves if we have the Eye of the Eagle—it’s found in both v. 16 and in v. 26.

This fact should be noted by all these “Balaam Boys” as I call them on The Inspiration Network, TBN, etc., who have sold their ministry like Gehazi did in exactly the same manner—telling lies to men and women of God for material profit. If Elisha was like one of these modern day Balaams he would have sent his messenger to Naaman with the simple instructions: “Sow a seed against that leprosy in the amount of \$20 million and then I will personally pray for you.”

And I cannot understand why Christians continue to support these works of the devil by sending their money to them and expecting some type anointing from those God has rejected as being His ministers. Remember, Jesus Himself said that “the Scriptures cannot be broken” and the Scriptures are clear that only those “with clean hands and a pure heart” shall minister to and for the Lord.

Now let’s return to the main subject of this teaching—the sin of unbelief and how unbelief can lead to condemnation. When the Lord spoke to me in Ron’s house in Portland, Oregon, and said: “If his faith doesn’t fail then I will heal him” we can learn just like Naaman’s testimony of healing and many others in the Scriptures—especially where personal prophecy is involved—that more often than not the promises of God are conditional. We must do something in order to receive the promise, right? Why is that? Because the Word says that without faith it is impossible to please God and God wants to increase our faith.

Very often we miss God ourselves because we don’t understand this fact and because we don’t recognize that God has a provided way to meet our need. I’ve had God try to use me to answer somebody’s

prayer for a miracle or healing but that person did not recognize God's Provided Way and normally it was because of pride! They were just like Naaman! Except that Naaman listened to godly counsel. In 2 Kings 5, what was God's Provided Way for Naaman? When God's prophet gave Naaman the way—"go dip in the River Jordan 7 times and you will be healed of your leprosy"—do you think that Naaman would have been healed if he had followed his own counsel and just gone back to Syria and dipped 7 times in the Pharpar river?

Similarly today, we must also find God's Provided Way for those things we are praying and petitioning Him for because unless we recognize God's Provided Way we might miss God and not receive our answer. So we see that the condemnation spoken about in Romans 14 has to do with the penalty for the sin of unbelief which counteracts our faith and causes us not to receive the blessings of God that we are believing for. Make no mistake. The devil knows this and that is exactly why he attacks your faith in the Word and the Way (if you discover God's Provided Way).

So in closing this teaching article let's take one last example—the man who is considered the Father of Faith—Abraham. In fact, if you're smart, you will study his life and in particular take a look at all the personal prophecies that God gave to him to see if and when they were fulfilled but you won't find these answers in Genesis alone. No! But you will find the journey rewarding and it will help you understand and appreciate God more as He teaches you to "pull out the scroll."

At age 75 Abram (Abraham) was already blessed of God and chosen of God. He was wealthy and well established in the land yet God told him to "Go to a land that I will show you"; in other words, you're going to have to leave your wealth, friends, etc.—your *comfort zone*—and go from here. "Where am I going, Lord?" "I'll show you after you leave."

Now understand that God's promise of the blessing on Abram was conditional. Like Elijah after him Abram had to go to the place called

“there” in order to receive God’s Provided Way—the Blessings and Promises of God. Had Elijah not gone to the Brook Cherith he would not have been provided for during the drought and famine because that was God’s Provided Way and we, too, like Abraham and Elijah must find God’s Provided Way in our own lives and often we miss it as Christians because we don’t know this fact or because we place circumstances above the will of the Lord. For example, most Christians make the decision about where they live based on their job. I ask Christians all the time—“How did you end up here (in Lodebar)?” And most of the time they say: “Well, my husband’s company transferred us here” or something like that. Rarely do we ever hear: “Well, we prayed and fasted for 3 weeks and the Lord said ...” No wonder we have trouble finding God’s Provided Way and then we often blame Him for our own failings.

Had Abraham not obeyed God to “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you” (Genesis 12:1) then he would not have inherited the promises and God would have had to choose somebody else to carry out His purposes and plans.

Now I want to end this teaching by sharing a night vision that the Lord gave me a few days ago regarding healing because it pertains to this teaching article. In the vision I was speaking to a large group of Christians about healing and how to receive healing from the Lord. While I was speaking to them all of a sudden the Lord Himself began to speak to all of us from Heaven and He said the following:

“When the devil tries to put sickness or disease upon your body it’s like the wind blowing against your body (in the vision I saw and felt this strong wind blowing against my body and passing on beyond me). You feel it blow against your body but then the wind passes on and there are no lasting effects upon your body. So likewise are these

attacks of the devil. If you will trust me and believe my word they will pass on beyond your body and you will suffer no ill effects.”

So remember the importance of the sin of unbelief—believe the Word of the Lord, every time—don’t question it and don’t doubt it. Pray into the 3 W’s—the Will, the Word and the Way of the Lord—to understand God’s Provided Way for and you will be blessed just like Abraham, Elijah and others who have followed the Spirit of the Lord into the Promised Land.