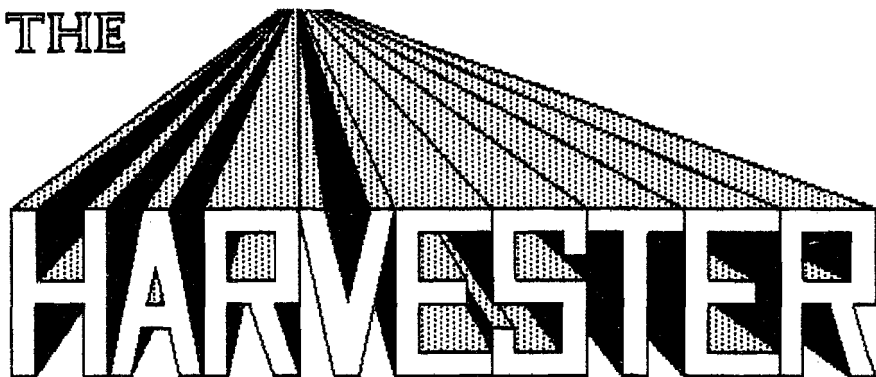


THE



"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." [Luke 10:2]

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No. 133

## THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

Johnny always enjoys Sundays. Every Sunday morning Johnny and his family get to sleep a little later than they do throughout the week. After they finally get up, Alice has a nice breakfast prepared and the whole family sits down together to enjoy it. After he gets through eating, Johnny sits at the table and reads the newspaper for a while. Alice clears the dishes from the table and the kids go into the next room and turn on the TV.

When Alice finally gets the kitchen in order she goes into the living room and tells the kids that it is time to start getting ready for Church. After a few gentle reminders, and some

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assistance for little Tracey, the kids are ready to go. Everyone piles into the station-wagon and off to Church they go. A couple of hours later they return home, enjoy a nice lunch, and pass the rest of the afternoon involved in various pursuits until it is time to return to Church for Sunday evening services. After returning home Sunday night the Bible is laid on the coffee table where it will remain, untouched, until it comes time for the next Christian duty, Wednesday evening services.

This is a typical story about a typical Christian family. Perhaps it reminds you of someone, possibly even yourself? But do you see anything wrong with this story? Would you say Johnny and Alice are good Christians? Are they setting the proper example for their children? Unfortunately, I'm afraid that this little scenario fits many Christian families all too well. For many people Christianity seems to have become a set of prescribed rituals which must be observed two or three times a week and little more. How closely does this compare with the lives of Christians in the first century? In short, it doesn't even come close!

Today we place great emphasis on attending the services of the Church. In fact, we often seem to pass judgement on other people's dedication to Christ based solely on how "faithful" they are to the services. While there may SOMETIMES be a relationship between dedication and attendance, this is not always the case. Someone might attend very faithfully merely to appease family or friends.

I feel that I need to pause here and clearly state my position so as not to give anyone the wrong impression. I do believe that the assembling of the Church is a necessary and vital part of

Christianity. We are clearly commanded not to forsake *"the assembling of ourselves together:"* (Hebrews 10:25) I am in no way trying to say that assembling together is optional, because it is not. But it is by far not the most important aspect of Christianity.

I have seen on many occasions when someone misses a service others begin to talk about them. To talk about how weak they are. That they just aren't like the Smiths who are there every time the door is open. Well, how do we know that Bro. Smith isn't running around with his secretary, while his wife stays home and gets drunk everyday watching the soap operas? My point is that just because someone regularly shows up at the Church building doesn't make them a strong, faithful Christian. And just because someone misses a service doesn't mean they are hopelessly weak.

Christianity is all about how we live our lives, and it involves every single aspect of our lives, not just attending Church services. At most we might spend 4 or 5 hours a week in Church services. This is significant when compared to the 160+ hours which remain.

When a person misses a service we so often jump to the conclusion that they just don't care enough to come. But how do we know that? There ARE legitimate reasons for missing a service. But who is to decide what is and what is not a legitimate reason? What one person might consider to be a good reason for missing, another might consider a lame excuse. Who is right?

We have to stop and realize that we do not all place the same significance on the same things. What might be vitally important to one person

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might be trivial to another. It all boils down to what is in a person's heart. The Bible tells us not to "forsake" the assembling of ourselves together. But where so many people are mistaken is when they equate missing a service with forsaking a service; they are not the same. Someone can be physically present at a service and still forsake it, and they can be absent from the service without forsaking it.

If a person makes every conceivable effort to attend a service then he has not forsaken it, regardless of whether he actually makes it there or not. And a person who attends for any reason other than worshipping God, such as pleasing a family member, has forsaken it even if he attends. So let us not be so hasty to judge one another.

In the New Testament we find numerous references to Christians being involved in many things other than the assembling of the Church. Teaching others, visiting the sick, helping the needy, etc. Are we a faithful Christian if we are present at every service but fail continuously to do any of these other things? How can we say forsaking the assembling of ourselves together is worse than failing to visit the sick when we are instructed to do both?

Do you feel that missing a service of the Church without cause is worse than telling a lie? Is it worse than committing adultery? Is it worse than murder? The fact is, sin is sin regardless of what flavor it happens to come in. Those who are weak in attending the services need our help and our support just like any other person who shows signs of weakness.

The problem is that missing a Church service is the most public sin a person can commit. When you miss everyone knows about it. Another person could go about committing just about every other sin under the sun and never be found out. Yet if they were faithful to the services they would be considered a good Christian.

Not a single one of us can lay claim to being perfect. We have all made mistakes, and continue to make mistakes. We are in no position to condemn anyone. We should be doing as Paul instructed. *"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak"* (Romans 15:1)

There is no need to sugar-coat it, when someone misses a service of the Church without cause it is wrong. But it is not the unpardonable sin which many people make it out to be. It is no worse than any other sin.

We should encourage each other to be at every service possible because it is an important part of our Christian lives. But it is just that, only a PART, and not all of it. There is much, much more to being a Christian. And let us not be like the scribes and Pharisees of Christ's day to whom He said, *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy,*

*and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." (Matthew 23:23)*  
 Let us make sure we do everything we are commanded to do in order to please God, and not just emphasize outward things like the services of the Church.

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## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. In what city did Simon the leper live?
2. According to the second commandment, why does God not tolerate idols or graven images?
3. What happened to the people of Gennesaret when they touched the fringes of Jesus' cloak?
4. What spice was to season every meat offering?
5. Why was David not allowed to build the temple of the Lord?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. Who did Nebuchadnezzar kill before Zedekiah's eyes? ZEDEKIAH'S SONS (Jer. 39:6)

2. Where did Laban overtake Jacob and his family: Mt. Gilead, Paddonaron, or Bethel?  
 MT. GILEAD (Gen. 31:23)

3. Who stopped Paul from going to the Thessalonians, according to 1 Thess.?  
 SATAN (1 Thess. 2:18)

4. During the ritual for the day of atonement, when the priest put his hands on the head of the scapegoat, what was he symbolically doing? PLACING THE SINS OF THE WHOLE CONGREGATION OF ISRAEL ON THE ANIMAL (Lev. 16:21)

5. What book follows Titus? PHILEMON

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Editor's Note: Last month we completed another year of publication -- our eleventh so far! Once again we want to acknowledge all those who had a part in this effort to help spread the Gospel. Without your many contributions we could not have continued on.

Thanks to those writers whose works we were able to use: Harry Cobb, Ricky Holland, James Terrell, Derald Walling, and Tony Whiddon. We also need to thank all of you who have sent in financial donations. They have been most appreciated. Likewise, we have received many wonderful words of encouragement which helps us tremendously. Thanks for all your support.

Special thanks are extended to the Sun Hill Road congregation. This past year they have been a great assistance in folding and labeling the 1100 (approx.) papers we mail each month. It's hard work, yes, but let all the glory belong to our Heavenly Father (Matt. 5:16). May he bless us all.

# BIBLE PRINCIPLES OF SALVATION

## I. ALL PEOPLE HAVE SINNED

1 Ki 8:46 Rom 3:10 Rom 3:23 Rom 5:12 1 Jn 1:8 1 Jn 5:19

## II. A SINNER WILL FACE ETERNAL DEATH

Ezek 33:8-9 Rom 6:23 2 Thes 1:7-9 Jas 1:15 Jas 5:20 Rev 21:8

Unless he:

1. Hears the Word of God  
Matt 13:23 Lk 10:39 Jn 10:16 Rom 10:17 Eph 1:13 1 Thes 2:13
2. Realizes Jesus Christ is the Only Way to Eternal Salvation  
Jn 6:68 Jn 14:6 Acts 4:12 Eph 2:18 1 Thes 5:9 Heb 5:9
3. Believes Jesus is the Son of God  
Mk 16:16 Jn 3:16 Jn 8:24 Jn 20:31 Acts 10:43 Acts 16:31 Heb 11:6
4. Is Convicted in his Heart of his Own Disobedience  
Acts 2:37 Acts 16:29 Acts 24:25 2 Cor 7:8-11
5. Repents of his Sins  
Lk 13:3 Acts 2:38 Acts 3:19 Acts 17:30 Acts 26:20
6. Confesses his Faith in the Lord Jesus  
Matt 10:32 Acts 8:37 Acts 19:18 Rom 10:9-10 Phil 2:11 1 Jn 4:15
7. Is Baptized by Immersion for the Remission of Sins in the  
Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost  
Matt 28:19 Mk 16:16 Jn 3:5 Acts 2:38 Acts 8:36-39 Acts 10:47-48  
Acts 16:33 Acts 22:16 Rom 6:3-6 Gal 3:27 Col 2:12 1 Pet 3:21
8. Lives a Faithful Life, Guided Only by the Authority of the NT  
Matt 25:21 Rom 1:16 Tit 2:11-12 Heb 4:12 Jas 1:21 1 Jn 5:4 Rev 2:10
9. Worships in Spirit & Truth, not Forsaking the Assembling, and  
Observing the Lord's Supper every first day of the week  
Matt 4:10 Jn 4:23-24 Acts 2:42 Acts 20:7 1 Cor 11:20-30 Heb 10:25
10. Prays for Forgiveness, if he should Fall into Sin again  
Acts 8:22 1 Cor 10:12-13 Eph 6:18 1 Thes 5:17 Jas 5:15-16 1 Jn 1:5-10

## III. ONLY THOSE WHO DO THE WILL OF GOD SHALL BE SAVED

Matt 7:21 Matt 12:50 Lk 6:47-48 Rom 2:13 Jas 1:22 1 Jn 2:17 Rev 22:14

*"Blessed are they that keep his testimonies,  
and that seek him with the whole heart."*

(Psalms 119:2)