

The One Sin God Won't Forgive

Text: Mark 3:22-30

Introduction:

1. Parallel accounts of the unpardonable sin can be read in Matthew 12:24-29 and Luke. 11:14-20.
2. Context: Both Matthew and Luke pin point the occasion as taking place when Christ cast out a demon. *“Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, is not this the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.”* (Matt. 12:22-24)
3. This section of Scripture is one of the most sobering in all of Scripture as it reveals a solemn warning concerning a sin that God will not forgive. In this sermon, through a careful study of the text in context, we will seek to gain an understanding of what the unpardonable sin is and how it can be committed.

I. **A Slandorous Reproach (Vs. 22)**

A. **The People of the Reproach (Vs. 22a)**

1. ‘scribes’ = Matthew says ‘Pharisees’. These men were well educated in the Old Testament Scriptures. They had witness Christ’s miracles and heard His claims.
2. “which came down from Jerusalem” = Jerusalem the religious capital. They were clearly there on account of Christ’s immense popularity so that they might oppose Him.

B. **The Process preceding the Reproach (Vs. 5-6; 2:7)**

1. In order to understand the nature of the unpardonable sin, we must see it in the context of what has transpired so far between the religious leaders and Christ.
2. The blasphemy of the religious leaders against the Holy Spirit was the result of a process of hardening their hearts against the Lordship and claims of Christ. Rather than their hearts getting softer to the call of the Gospel over time, they were hardening their hearts in willful rebellion and unbelief.
3. Their progression in hardening their hearts against Christ as their Messiah can be clearly traced from the context:
 - a. Mark 2:7 – they inwardly questioned Christ’s authority to forgive sins, objecting to the salvation by grace message Christ presented.
 - b. Mark 2:16 – with religious arrogance and pride, they contested Christ’s compassion for sinners, believing them to be below their elevated status.

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- c. In Mark 2:24 they challenged Christ's Lordship over the Sabbath Day.
 - d. In Mark 3:5, Christ is grieved at the hardness of their hearts.
 - e. In Mark 3:6, they take their opposition to the next level when they begin plotting Christ's murder.
4. **Key Point:** Their blasphemous words were not a casual slip of the tongue or a result of ignorance. They were the climax of a process of willful rebellion and hardening of the heart against the light they had received. This was the crowning point of their opposition to Christ. Their blasphemous words simply revealed the hardened state of their unrepentant hearts – “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” (Matt. 12:34)

C. The Particulars of the Reproach (Vs. 22b)

1. The audience – these words were spread to the people following Christ in an attempt to slander and undermine His ministry. The crowd, on account of the miracle, was rightly contemplating whether Jesus was the Messiah. It appears they did not confront Christ directly with their accusation as “he called them unto him” (Vs. 23) and Matthew's account says “Jesus knew their thoughts” (Matt. 12:25)
2. The accusation – that Christ was possessed of Satan and therefore the miracle of casting out the demon was done with Satanic power. They asserted that Christ was an agent of Satan rather than One sent from God.
 - a. ‘said’ = imperfect tense. “they were saying” This was not a once off, casual remark but a repeated and persistent blaspheming of Christ's ministry.
 - b. ‘Beelzebub’ = a title of Satan who is “the prince of the devils”. This was unspeakably evil to attribute the miraculous workings of the Holy Spirit through Christ to the power and workings of Satan.

II. A Sound Rebuttal (Vs. 23-27)

A. Christ Exposed their Absurdity (Vs. 23-26)

1. The Inquiry (question) (Vs. 23)
 - a. ‘parables’ = Christ would give them some simple illustrations to reveal how illogical and foolish their accusation was.
 - b. “How can Satan cast out Satan?” = question points out the obvious absurdity of their claim. Such an idea didn't even make sense!
2. The Illustrations (Vs. 24-25)
 - a. Illustration of a kingdom (Vs. 24)
 - i. A divided kingdom is a doomed kingdom!

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- ii. If Satan was destroying his own kingdom, he would be working against his own purposes! Satan would not authorize such a catastrophic attack on his own kingdom.
- b. Illustration of a household (Vs. 25)
 - a. The same principle applies in a household.
 - b. A divided home ultimately means a destroyed home.
- 3. The Implication (Vs. 26)
 - a. Christ now draws the conclusion from these two illustrations and relates it back to the point in question (Vs. 23)
 - b. If Satan opposed himself, his own kingdom, then his kingdom would crumble. And that is the total opposite to what Satan is trying to do!

B. Christ Revealed His Authenticity (Vs. 27)

Christ now presents the true explanation of his victories over the demons. He does so by giving a parable of a strong man who is overcome by one who is stronger.

- 1. The Strong – Satan
 - a. He is 'armed' (Luke 11:21)
 - b. He guards his 'house' or 'palace' (Lk. 11:21) to protect his 'goods'. The word 'goods' comes from the Greek word 'vessel'. "His goods" apparently are the human victims whom Satan holds in his power through his demonic agents. (Hiebert)
 - c. Picture is of Satan holding lost souls in bondage. People are so often deceived in Satan's palace. They think they are living in freedom and luxury but don't realize they are in bondage and cannot leave unless rescued by someone stronger than Satan.
 - d. Illustration: Imagine walking down the corridors of Satan's palace. There are multiple doors to multiple rooms, all promising certain pleasures. Inside each room are multiple people who think they are free when in reality they are captives.
- 2. The Stronger – the Saviour
 - a. Luke 11:22 *"But when **a stronger than he** shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils."*
 - b. Christ is the "stronger than he". He is stronger than the strong and stronger than the strongest!
 - c. Christ's casting out of the demon proved the exact opposite to what the religious leaders were saying. Christ was not working for Satan's cause, he was destroying Satan's power, delivering precious souls from His oppressive grasp.

III. A Sobering Rebuke (Vs. 28-30)

A. The Potential for Forgiveness (Vs. 28)

1. 'verily' = first use of this word in Mark's Gospel. Christ's tone changes distinctly in this verse from one of reasoning to warning. The word 'verily' means amen, surely, truly. "Word occurs in statements which affirm or confirm a solemn truth." (Hendriksen)
2. "all sins shall be forgiven...and blasphemies" = the wideness of God's mercy is revealed in this statement. God offers forgiveness for the vilest sins if men will but repent and receive the free gift of His grace.
3. God is patient and longsuffering so that men might have an opportunity to repent. He bears long with them (Rom. 2:4; 2. Peter 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:4). God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked but rather desires their repentance (Ez. 33:11; Isaiah 28:21).

B. The Prohibited from Forgiveness (Vs. 29-30)

1. 'but' = the grim alternative to the above
2. "he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost" = it is the Spirit's office to convict of sin and convince of Christ. In context, this was an act of willful and deliberate unbelief in the face of much light they had received from Christ's words and works. It came from hearts that had been progressively hardened to the point where they were in danger of passing the point of no return where they would not be afforded any more opportunity to repent.
3. Hendriksen makes an insightful remark on this matter

"Now to be forgiven implies that the sinner be truly penitent. Among the scribes here indicated such genuine sorrow for sin was totally lacking. For penitence they substituted hardening, for confession plotting. Thus, by means of their own criminal and completely inexcusable callousness, they were dooming themselves. Their sin is unpardonable because they are unwilling to tread the path that leads to pardon. For a thief, an adulterer, and a murderer there is hope. The message of the gospel may cause him to cry out, "O God be merciful to me a sinner." But when a man has become hardened, so that he has made up his mind not to pay any attention to the promptings of the Spirit, not even to listen to his pleading and warning voice, he has placed himself on the road that leads to perdition."

4. "because they said" = imperfect tense – "They were saying". "The tense indicates that it was not so much a single act as an attitude of heart which persisted in rejecting the light by calling good evil and evil good. In such a state, the Holy Spirit can no longer work to produce conviction of sin." (Hiebert)
5. Challenge: The lost sinner can still commit this sin today by repeatedly hardening their hearts against the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. Those particularly in danger of committing this sin are those who have been favoured with the light of the Gospel and then made a deliberate choice to reject it.
6. Gen. 6:3 *"And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with*

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man...

7. Warning! You may say “no” again and again to the offer of salvation, but God will have the final say. He knows when you have crossed that line that takes you beyond redemption’s point.
8. It is clear the bulk of the religious leaders crossed that line at this point as Christ will now primarily teach in parables in order to conceal the truth from them, and thereby ensure their judgment (Look at Mark 4:10-12)
9. Illustration: Pharaoh hardened his heart repeatedly, then God hardened His heart.
10. Example: The Romans 1 progression. As man rejects the light and persists in wilful rebellion against God, eventually God gives them up (Vs. 24 & 26) and then gives them over to a reprobate mind (Vs. 28)

Conclusion: Repent and receive Christ NOW while you still have the opportunity.

Hebrews 3:15 “...*To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts...*”

2 Cor. 6:2 “...**now** is the accepted time; behold, **now** is the day of salvation.”