

FBC POWELL 11-27-16 AM NOTES
"The Sin That Will Not Be Forgiven"
Matthew 12:22-32
Non-Series Message

Psalm 86:5 "For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You."

Psalm 103:3a "Who pardons all your iniquities..."

Daniel 9:9a "To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness..."

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."

Mark 3:29b "...never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin."

Matthew 12:31b "...blasphemy against the Spirit"

Matthew 12:32b "...speaks against the Holy Spirit"

I. The Exact Identity of This Unforgivable Sin Must Be Made Clear (vv. 22-30)

A. The Unforgivable Sin Is a Sin Against Revelation (vv. 22-23)

B. The Unforgivable Sin Is a Sin Against Reason (vv. 24-30)

Matthew 9:34 "But the Pharisees were saying, 'He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons.'"

Matthew 10:25 "It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!"

Matthew 12:24 "But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, 'This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons.'"

1. "I cannot be casting out demons by demonic power, because then Satan would be fighting against himself and his kingdom could not stand."
2. "If I am not casting out demons by the power of Satan, the only other possibility is that I am doing it by the power of God."
3. "If I am casting out demons by the power of God, then the Kingdom of God has come to you."
4. "If the Kingdom of God has come to you, then I am the King—the Messiah."

II. The Specifics of This Unforgivable Sin Are Chilling (vv. 31-32)

A. The Three Prominent Interpretations of This Sin

1. The Unforgivable Sin Could Be Committed Only While Jesus Was Bodily On Earth
2. The Unforgivable Sin Is the Sin of Unbelief That Continues Until Physical Death

3. The Unforgivable Sin Is a Final Rejection of the Holy Spirit's Conviction Resulting in His Withdrawal

"What Jesus calls 'the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit' (in Matthew 12:31-32) and 'eternal sin' (in Mark 3:29) is the resistance against the Holy Spirit's convicting work to the point where He withdraws, leaving the sinner in helpless hardness of heart, unable to repent."
—John Piper

B. The Proposed Proper Interpretation of the Unforgivable Sin

1. There Is a Clear Holy Spirit-Given Knowledge of Who Christ Is
2. There Is a Willful Rejection of the Facts About Christ That the One Rejecting Knows to be True
3. There Is Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit

"[It is a] constant and consummate opposition to the influence of the Holy Spirit, because of a deliberate preference of darkness to the light."
—A. H. Plummer

"[It is] a combination of clear intellectual knowledge of the gospel, with deliberate rejection of it and willful choice of sin; the union of light in the head and hatred in the heart."
—J. C. Ryle

1 Timothy 1:13-14 "even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus."

John 16:8-11 "And He [the Holy Spirit], when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged."

Blasphemy is defiant irreverence. It is to reject truth knowing fully that what one is rejecting is indeed truth. It is a **final, full refusal to believe** showing defiant irreverence to the Spirit of truth and it was unforgivable, "either in this age or in the age to come" (v. 32).

C. Two Other Passages Dealing With the Unforgivable Sin

1. **Hebrews 6:4-6** "For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame."
2. **John 12:37-40 (NKJV)** "But although He had done so many signs before them, **they did not believe** in Him, that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: 'Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?' Therefore **they could not believe**, because Isaiah said again: 'He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, lest they should see with their eyes, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.'"

"Nothing hardens like the gospel when it is long trifled with."

—Charles Spurgeon

"What is this blasphemy or sin against the holy Spirit? Christian people are often troubled that they are guilty of it. The answer is this: if you are troubled about it, you can be absolutely certain that you are not guilty of it...The people, therefore, who are guilty of the sin against the Holy Spirit not only do not believe in Christ, they do not want to believe in Him; they ridicule Him; they treat Him with scorn and derision; they turn their backs on Him and dismiss Him."
—Martin Lloyd-Jones

First Baptist Church Powell 11 27 2016 AM

Sermon Title: The Sin That Will Not Be Forgiven

Matthew 12:22-32

Non-Series Message

One of the questions that I have been asked many times over the years is, “What is the ‘unpardonable’ or ‘unforgivable’ sin?” When you read Matthew 12:22-32 it seems obvious that there is only one sin that is unforgivable. To speak of any sin that God will not forgive seems on the surface to be contrary to what is said about God in the Scripture. Our God is a forgiving God! Listen to just a few representative verses.

Psalm 86:5: “For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You.”

Psalm 103:3a speaks of God and says, “Who pardons all your iniquities...”

Daniel 9:9a: “To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness...”

1 Corinthians 6:9-11: “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”

These sins in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 are considered by many, even in the world, to be some of the most evil sins imaginable and yet God forgives them. In the Scriptures, we see examples of God forgiving almost every moral sin a person could commit. He even forgave Saul of Tarsus who was by his own admission, “the chief of sinners.” Saul had rejected Christ and persecuted the church. The forgiveness of God is never stopped by the volume of sin, the hideousness of the sin, or the earthly consequences of the sin. Yet, there is a sin that Matthew 12:31 says, “shall not be forgiven.” In verse 32 this same sin is referred to when Jesus says “it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.” This same sin is referred to in Mark 3:29b where Jesus says of a person who has committed this sin that he “never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.”

This sin that will not be forgiven is identified in Matthew 12:31 as “blasphemy against the Spirit.” In Matthew 12:32 it is called speaking “against the Holy Spirit.” Exactly what does that mean? It is important that we get this right because the consequence of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is that there is no forgiveness for that sin. No forgiveness of sin means no salvation; no salvation means eternity separated from God and all that is good in a place called “Hell.”

I. The Exact Identity of This Unforgivable Sin Must Be Made Clear (v 22-30)

With such severe and eternal consequences we must be very clear about this unforgivable sin’s identity.

A. The Unforgivable Sin Is a Sin against Revelation (v 22-23)

It was absolutely undeniable that a miracle had been performed before these religious leaders. The man Jesus healed was demon possessed. He was also blind and mute. *Mute* means that he was unable to speak. It seems that this undeniable miracle had nothing to do with the faith of the demon possessed man because he could not even communicate. This miracle clearly showed the deity of Christ and His power over Satan and sickness. Verse 23 says the common people were “amazed” at this display of power. The word translated “amazed” is a strong word that meant that they were amazed to the highest level; they were absolutely astounded at what they had just seen! The prophets had foretold that the Messiah (“Son of David” is a Messianic name) would do miracles like this. The buzz going through the crowd was, “Maybe this is the One that the prophets spoke of; maybe this is the One we have looked for and longed for.”

Here in the midst of this display of the power and deity of Christ, these hard-hearted religious leaders, having seen the evidence, made a final sort of rejection of Christ. They had the light (truth) of the Son of God in the flesh, the light of the manifested power of God, and the light of fulfilled prophesy right in front of them, and with cold, hardened, evil hearts they rejected the light, and the truth clearly revealed in Christ as He performed this miracle. This is very important in understanding the unforgivable sin.

B. The Unforgivable Sin Is a Sin Against Reason (v 24-30)

There is a concept in history called “the big lie.” It has been used by leaders throughout history. This concept says that if you repeat a lie loudly, and long enough, people will begin to believe it. Nero used it when he blamed the Christians for burning Rome. Hitler used it when he blamed the Jews for Germany’s problems after WWI. It is being used today by much of the educational system to spread the big lie of Darwinian evolution.

The Pharisees had their own “big lie” that they propagated about Jesus. Their big lie was that Jesus did His miraculous works by the power of the devil. We see it earlier in Matthew 9:34: “But the Pharisees were saying, ‘He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons.’” Matthew 10:25: “It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!”

These Pharisees faced a dilemma. To deny that a supernatural miracle had taken place was not an option. The evidence was right before them. They had to do something because the people were moving toward accepting Jesus as the Messiah. Their response was to pull out the “big lie” again. Matthew 12:24: “But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, ‘This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons.’” Who is this Beelzebul? We know it became a word for Satan or the chief of demons, but there’s not a lot of agreement on the origin of the word. The most likely one is that its origin was that he was the Phoenician god of filth. You may wonder why any people would have a god of filth. The Phoenicians were very interested in the origin of life. They didn’t really know where life came from. When they saw something rotting (such as a dead carcass), out of that rotting substance came life – little white wiggling worms (maggots). They didn’t understand that it was from flies laying their eggs on the rotting flesh. They reasoned that there must be some kind of god who brought forth that life. They named him Beelzebul, the god of filth or rotteness. To the Jews this was the absolute height of depravity so they used it as the worst name possible for Satan. This shows their contempt and pure hatred for Jesus in saying that He got His power from the god of filth. They were saying, “Yes, He exercised supernatural power in casting out the demon and healing the blind and mute man, but He did it by power granted Him from the god of filth.” Jesus proceeded to make fools out of these Pharisees whose logic was perverted by their hatred and prejudice toward Jesus.

In verses 25-26 Jesus showed them the logical inconsistencies of their argument. Satan casting out his own demons would defeat his own cause by dividing his evil kingdom. A Satan defeating ministry cannot be explained by complicity with Satan. Jesus was in collision with the Devil and his kingdom, not in collusion with him. This would have put Satan’s kingdom in a state of civil war. Jesus in verse 27 revealed their prejudice against Him. Matthew 12:27: “If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? For this reason they will be your judges.”

“Sons” were often used of disciples or followers. Certain followers of the Pharisees were casting out demons. The Jewish historian Josephus gives accounts of this. Why were they not accused of doing it in Satan’s power? It is interesting that this response of the Pharisees in rejecting Jesus is somewhat like every person who rejects Jesus. They didn’t reject Him for a lack of evidence; it was because they were prejudiced against Him because their own deeds were evil. Their deeds were evil and Jesus was pure and righteous. They were children of the darkness and He was the light of the world. The majority of those who reject Christ today do not do so because they have intellectual problems; it is because they have sin problems. They can’t find Jesus for the same reason a thief can’t find a policeman. They don’t want to find Him. Their sin has blinded their eyes and they are spiritually blind.

Notice Jesus irrefutable reasoning in these verses:

1. “I cannot be casting out demons by demonic power, because then Satan would be fighting against himself and his kingdom could not stand.”
2. “If I am not casting out demons by the power of Satan, the only other possibility is that I am doing it by the power of God.”
3. “If I am casting out demons by the power of God, then the Kingdom of God has come to you.”

4. “If the Kingdom of God has come to you, then I am the King – the Messiah.”

In verses 29-30, Jesus reiterated that all that He did was in obvious opposition to Satan. His point is that He has over and over demonstrated His power over Satan. Who but God in flesh could enter Satan’s house and bind him and carry off those who were his captives. “If I defeat Satan at will, then am I not your Messiah?” In verse 30, Jesus took away the option of being neutral toward Him. Neutrality toward Jesus is not an option. It is not necessary to actively oppose Christ to be against Him. That is what the phrase “...he who does not gather with me scatters” means. A person scatters who is not actively with Him. The point is that you cannot be neutral when it comes to Christ. You are either with Him or you are against Him. To say nice things about Him as a teacher or a man of good works, but to refuse to bow in submission before Him is not an option. You bow in trust and submission or you are against Him.

II. The Specifics of This Unforgivable Sin Are Chilling (v 31-32)

Even before we fully understand these verses, they are ominous and frightening. The last phrase in verse 32 is especially chilling, “...shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.” There are few passages in Scripture that have been more misinterpreted than this one. There are some who teach that suicide is this unpardonable sin, but suicide is nowhere in the context of this passage. When I pastored in Ohio, there was a denomination that taught that remarriage after divorce was the unpardonable sin because all remarriage was a continual living in adultery and no adulterer can enter the Kingdom of heaven. Just as suicide is nowhere in the context of this passage, neither is divorce or remarriage. The unforgivable sin is stated as “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.” There are several major views as to what is involved in this sin.

A. The Three Prominent Interpretations of This Sin

1. The Unforgivable Sin Could Be Committed Only While Jesus Was Bodily on Earth

This view teaches that the sin was attributing the miracles of Jesus (seen in person) to satanic power. Since Jesus has ascended to the Father and is no longer here bodily, this sin cannot be committed today. I don’t think this view is correct because there is no such restriction in the text. The first part of verse 31 is more general in nature and refers to times beyond when Jesus was here bodily. Later in the message we will see a parallel passage in Hebrews 6:4-6 that was written after Jesus ascended to the Father.

2. The Unforgivable Sin Is the Sin of Unbelief That Continues Until Physical Death

In other words, it is the sin of refusing to receive Christ on one’s last opportunity before they die. This is a better interpretation than the first one, but it still has problems. It is certainly true that everyone who dies having not repented of sin and trusted in Jesus will not be forgiven, but that doesn’t seem to be what He is talking about here. It is presented as a sin that can be committed anytime in a person’s life. The final sin in this view, however, cannot be determined until death.

3. The Unforgivable Sin Is a Final Rejection of the Holy Spirit’s Conviction Resulting in His Withdrawal

John Piper explains the third view this way, “What Jesus calls ‘the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit’ (in Matthew 12:31-32) and ‘eternal sin’ (in Mark 3:29) is the resistance against the Holy Spirit’s convicting work to the point where He withdraws, leaving the sinner in helpless hardness of heart, unable to repent.” [John Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World*, page 320]

B. The Proposed Proper Interpretation of the Unforgivable Sin

While there are good and godly Bible scholars who believe different ones of these three interpretations of the unforgivable sin, I am convinced that the third one is the correct interpretation. As we examine the text, there are three things necessary for this unforgivable sin to take place:

1. There is a clear Holy Spirit given knowledge of who Christ is.
2. There is a willful rejection of the facts about Christ that the one rejecting knows to be true.
3. There is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

Look at some quotes, from great Bible scholars of days gone by, about the nature of this unforgivable sin. “[It is a] constant and consummate opposition to the influence of the Holy Spirit, because of a deliberate preference of darkness to the light.” [A. H. Plummer, quoted in Oswald Sanders, *The Holy Spirit and His Gifts*, page 103]

“[It is] a combination of clear intellectual knowledge of the gospel, with deliberate rejection of it and willful choice of sin; the union of light in the head and hatred in the heart.” [J. C. Ryle, Sanders, *ibid*, page 104]

Let us ask and answer some questions about this passage. Why is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit unforgivable and yet blasphemy against Christ is forgivable? The apostle Paul confessed that he was a former blasphemer of Christ and was forgiven because he was ignorant of who Christ was. 1Timothy 1:13-14: “even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.” This distinction between God the Son and God the Spirit has nothing to do with worth and value within the Trinity. It has to do with the office work of the Holy Spirit. His office work is to guide into all truth and to bring conviction. John 16:8-11: “And He [the Holy Spirit], when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.” To blaspheme the Holy Spirit is to reject the one whose role is to convict and convince of truth and sin and the need for a Savior. Christ can be blasphemed in ignorance; the Holy Spirit cannot because He is the one who convicts of truth.

Here is another key question. What does it mean to *blaspheme*? Blasphemy is defiant irreverence. It is to reject truth knowing fully that what one is rejecting is indeed truth. It was a *final full refusal to believe* showing defiant irreverence to the Spirit of truth and it was unforgivable, “either in this age or in the age to come” (Verse 32). On the cross, Jesus prayed for the Father to forgive the very ones who put Him there. Why? Because, “they know not what they do.” These Pharisees knew exactly what they were doing. With full knowledge given by the Holy Spirit they refused to believe and their hard hearts led them to commit an unforgivable sin.

C. Two Other Passages Dealing with the Unforgivable Sin

There are several other passages in Scripture that speak of this unforgivable sin without calling it by that name. Here are two of those passages.

1. Hebrews 6:4-6: “For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.” This is a picture of what the New Testament calls an “apostate.” This is speaking of people who had much knowledge and conviction of the truth. They have been enlightened. They have tasted the heavenly gift. They have experienced the Holy Spirit’s convicting work, and much more, but they have never savingly believed in Christ. If they turn away from Christ, they will never be saved. They will have committed unforgivable sin.

2. John 12:37-40: But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: ‘Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’ Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: ‘He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, lest they should see with their eyes, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.’

Charles Spurgeon said, “Nothing hardens like the gospel when it is long trifled with.” [200 Spurgeon Quotes, page 267]

Conclusion

Listen to a final word to those who fear that they might have committed this unforgivable sin. I will do it with a quote from a godly man of days gone by. Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones said:

What is this blasphemy or sin against the holy Spirit? Christian people are often troubled that they are guilty of it. The answer is this: if you are troubled about it, you can be absolutely certain that you are not guilty of it...The people, therefore, who are guilty of the sin against the Holy Spirit not only do not believe in Christ, they do not want to believe in Him; they ridicule Him; they treat Him with scorn and derision; they turn their backs

on Him and dismiss Him.

[“Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Great Doctrines of the Bible Volume 2*, page 275]

There should be both comfort in some who hear these truths and terror in others who hear them. There should be comfort to those who long to be right with God but fear that they have committed this sin. There should be terror to those who are trifling with the truth. A person cannot get saved whenever they choose. Unless the Holy Spirit does a convicting work in a life and unless God grants repentance and faith, no one can be saved. I leave you with the words of Hebrews 3:7-8a: “Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, ‘Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts...’”

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