

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

"Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come" Matthew 12:31-32.

"But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness." Mark 3:29.

Passing through the cornfields on the Sabbath, Christ and His disciples, being hungry, plucked the ears of corn and began to eat. For this the Master was censured bitterly by the scribes and the Pharisees. Going from their presence into the synagogue, the Saviour found a man with a withered hand, perhaps brought there on purpose to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath. This Christ did promptly, first asking the scribes and Pharisees if a man was not of much more value than a sheep, which, if it fell into a ditch on the Sabbath, would be rescued at once by its owner. After this rebuke, they took counsel how they might destroy Him. It seems that the more graciously Christ worked in their midst the more they hated Him.

Shortly thereafter, and perhaps on the same Sabbath, Christ healed a poor wretch who was blind, dumb, and possessed of a demon. He delivered this miserable demoniac by casting out the demon that possessed him. This demon was unwillingly and forcibly ejected from his much desired stronghold and dispossessed of his ill-gotten spoils. This ejection was brought about by some supernatural and miraculous power, which was mightier than the outcast demon. It was a daylight affair, a public transaction, all the circumstances open and visible, and the fact was so incontrovertible that even the common people recognized the divine presence and power. When they saw in the miracle the evidence of a superior personality, they exclaimed one to another, "Is not this the son of David?"

Certain Pharisees, who had been pursuing Christ with hostile intent, who had been obstructing His work in every possible way, and who had found themselves unable to dispute the fact of the miracle, sought to break its force by attributing its origin to Beelzebub, the prince of demons, thus charging Christ with collusion with Satan. In a most contemptuous manner they said: "This fellow doth not cast out demons, but by Beelzebub the prince of the demons." In their retort we see a deep malignancy of evil, an inveteracy of opposition to the truth, a capacity to hate One Who had done a good work, and instead of seeing in that good work an evidence of the power of God, they discerned therein only what they called an indication of collusion with the devil. How perverse, and blind, and hardened in heart, and steeped in hate and prejudice they were against Him! It is such people, Christ says, who commit the unpardonable sin. And for them there is no hope!

Our scripture lesson tells us plainly and positively that in all the catalogue of sins which men or women can commit, there is only one sin that puts a man or a woman beyond hope; that there is only one sin that God will not and cannot forgive; that there is only one sin that people commit which makes pardon and salvation impossible. It is sad enough for one to have committed sins that can be, and are forgiven, but the thought that there is a sin which God Himself does not and cannot forgive staggers our imagination. But there is only one sin that man can commit which is unpardonable. And an unpardonable sin is one which from the moment of its committal is forever without a possible remedy. Though such a sinner may be permitted to live many years, yet the very door of hope is closed against him.

Through the ages there have been those who have committed the unpardonable sin. There is a question that has tortured many a soul both in the past and in the present, namely, "Have I committed the unpardonable sin?" If anyone is troubled by the fear that he or she has committed the unpardonable sin, that very fear or distress of mind is good evidence that the unpardonable sin has not been committed. The reason for saying this is that those who are guilty of it are not troubled about it. Instead, they are calloused in spirit, indifferent, and unconcerned, "having their conscience seared with a hot iron" I Timothy 4:2.

I. What Is The Unpardonable Sin?

The unpardonable sin is a subject which is greatly misunderstood. Many erroneous ideas are abroad as to what it is. In view of this fact, it is well for us to study the subject first from a negative standpoint.

1. It Is Not Murder.

Even murder, as desperate and awful a sin as it is is not unpardonable. There have been many men and women who have stained their hands with human blood who have afterwards found pardon and received eternal life, and become true and noble Christians. We certainly regret that anybody ever committed murder, but the Bible tells us of numerous cases of people who have been guilty of murder, and yet received forgiveness.

Moses was a murderer. David was guilty of one of the most dastardly murders in history, and yet he found pardon. It was after David had brought on himself the guilt of the death of Uriah, his faithful soldier, that he wrote the words: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" Psalm 32:1-5.

Saul of Tarsus, who afterwards became Paul the apostle, was a murderer. He was responsible for the death of people because they believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet he found pardon. One of these days we shall meet Moses and David and Paul in heaven, because they were saved and so are we. Therefore, murder is not the unpardonable sin.

2. It Is Not Adultery.

Immorality and adultery are loathsome sins, but not unpardonable. David was declared of God to be a man after His own heart, even after he had committed murder and adultery. Then, you remember the case of the woman who was taken in the very act of adultery. When they brought her to Christ, and then disappeared because they too were sinners, the Saviour said to her, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?" She said, "No man, Lord." And Jesus said unto her, "Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more" John 8:10-11. After she called Him, "Lord", and the Saviour said, "Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more", she went away forgiven and saved even though she had been an adulteress. Therefore, the sin of adultery is not unpardonable.

3. It Is Not Profanity.

Taking God's Name in vain is a terrible and an entirely unnecessary sin. In contrast with the prevalence of profanity today, even as indulged in by some in high places, it is well for us to remember what George Washington said about the wickedness of it in a General Order to his men in July, 1776. "It is a vice so mean and low, without any temptation, that every man of sense and character detests and despises it".

4. It Is Not Unbelief.

Perhaps no error is more prevalent than the one that maintains that persistent unbelief is the unpardonable sin. Unyielding unbelief or persistent rejection of Christ does result in perdition; but a sharp distinction must be recognized between that condition after death in which no forgiveness of any sin is available, and the supposition that one might reach such a hopeless state in this life. As long as one is an unbeliever, he is in a lost condition, but any moment he will believe on Christ as his personal Saviour, he will receive a full and free pardon.

It is also well for us to look at this question, "What is The Unpardonable Sin?", from a positive viewpoint.

1. It Is A Definite Act.

Even though it may be the outcome of a series of actions, the unpardonable sin is one definite act. "There is a sin unto death" I John 5:16.

2. It Is Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit.

"The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." What is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? It is worthwhile for us to consider the context of the solemn words of our Lord spoken concerning blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. The Pharisees had seen the miracles of Christ and in them they recognized the clear evidence that he was the Messiah. They determined that they would not accept Him as such. In their determination not to accept Him, they deliberately attributed His work in casting out a demon from a man, which they knew to be the work of the Holy Spirit, to the devil. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is knowingly, deliberately, wilfully, and maliciously ascribing to Satan the work which is magnificently wrought by the Holy Spirit. The Pharisees attributed to Satan the work done by One Who was filled with the Spirit of God. They charged that the power by which Jesus did His marvelous works came from the devil instead of from the Holy Spirit. That sin was without excuse, and it was impossible for it to be forgiven in their age or in the future.

Dr. John A. Broadus taught that two things are necessary to constitute blasphemy of the Holy Spirit: first, that there shall be a work manifestly supernatural, unmistakably the work of God, and second, one shall in malignant and determined opposition insultingly ascribe to Satan that which he knows to be the work of God.

Blasphemy is a sin of the tongue. It means to speak ill or injuriously of another, to revile or to defame anyone, whether man or God. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which is the unpardonable sin, is the ascribing of the Holy Spirit's gracious and holy activities to the devil. It is to say that the works of God's Spirit are the works of Satan. To know that a work is of God and then to attribute it to the devil is to commit the unpardonable sin.

This sin is committed against light. It is not a sin to be committed by a thoughtless child, an immature youth, nor a feeble-minded or ignorant person.

It is a sin against spiritual knowledge. It is knowingly, wilfully, maliciously, and presumptuously done. It is a sin of character crystalized in opposition to God. One cannot commit the unpardonable sin unconsciously. It is not something one can do by accident or without knowing it. It is committed against light, and in most cases, much light. It indicates such a determined choice of evil that one's character is determined finally and forever. A man will not deliberately attribute to the devil what he knows to be the work of the Spirit of God unless he has settled that he will not accept the truth. Such a sin, which usually comes after persistent rejection of Christ and of the truth, makes repentance impossible.

II. Who Commits The Unpardonable Sin?

It is an act of the unregenerate only, and never of the saved. A Christian cannot commit the unpardonable sin. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" Romans 8:1. The unpardonable sin is committed only by an unsaved person. Those who are cleansed and indwelt by the Spirit most certainly will never blaspheme Him.

If one is concerned lest he has committed the unpardonable sin, then there is abundant hope for him, because he could not have conviction except through the Holy Spirit. Those who are troubled and concerned lest they have committed the unpardonable sin definitely have not done so. Their anxiety about it is in itself positive evidence that the sin has not been committed, because when a person is guilty of the unpardonable sin he has lost all spiritual sensitivity and is given over to his wickedness.

Any here who will accept Christ, no matter what your past may have been, no matter how grossly you may have sinned, if you will accept Him there is pardon, salvation and eternal life for you.