

God Has Spoken

Tract Series

Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit

(A tract by A. L. Parr)

...whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come (Matthew 12:32).

But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation (Mark 3:29).

Matthew chapter 12, Mark chapter 3 and Luke chapter 11 contain all of the record of the occasion on which Jesus taught one of the most frightening doctrines ever to come to the ear of a soul who is seeking Heaven. Many people have feared that they have (or may have) committed the one sin that is so terrible that it can never be forgiven regardless what they say or do. And what may be even more frightening: they usually don't even know what that sin is, or how they may have committed it.

Jesus and his apostles had come into a house (we don't know whose) in Galilee (God didn't even identify the town, because it simply isn't important), and a great press of people had crowded around Him (Mark 3:19-21). Someone "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" (Matthew 12:22). Matthew comments that "all the people were amazed, and

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds

(Hebrews 1:1-2)

said, Is not this the son of David?" (Verse 23). Luke says, "the people wondered" (11:14). The healing had arrested the attention of the packed house.

But there were some in the community who were not so amazed or full of wonder, for "when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils" (Matthew 12:24). Mark tells us that these were joined in their scoffing by "the scribes which came down from Jerusalem" (Mark 3:22). Luke did not fail to identify these prejudiced disbelievers, and adds that "others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven" (11:15-16).

And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you (Matthew 12:25 -28).

The Son of God pointed out the illogic in their declaration. The blind and dumb man had been controlled by the power of Satan. If it had been by Satan's power that Jesus healed the man it would have been a case of Satan empowering one man to defeat the power of Satan in another man. In the face of their foolish charge, Jesus asked them, "If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand?" (Luke 11:17-18).

LOGIC APPLIED

Then the Lord turned the glaring spotlight of logic on their inconsistency: "And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you" (Luke 11:19-20). When there is a problem in

human society there are always those who seek to profit by offering solutions – whether those solutions solve the problem, or don't. As pioneer America had its “patent medicine” hustlers, so Israel knew her so-called “magicians” who roamed from town to village professing to cast out devils. Political showmanship would sometimes endorse these magicians to give the impression of personal concern for suffering people. Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees that they had painted themselves into a corner by saying that the magicians had the power of God, but that the same power in Jesus was the power of Satan. He added that, if it were indeed the power of God in the magicians, then it was the power of God in Jesus, and if that were the case then the teaching of Jesus was true, and He had in fact brought the kingdom of God to them.

THE ISSUE

This was the issue at hand: did Jesus indeed work miracles by the power of God, and did He bring the kingdom of God into the world; or was he deceiving them with tricks and preaching lies?

In the parable of the strong man's house Jesus made it clear to all who heard Him that “He that is not with me is against me” (Matthew 12:30; Luke 11:23). In this context, and at this point in His reasoning, Jesus concluded:

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).

Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation (Mark 3:28-29).

Why did Jesus say such a thing? *Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit* (Mark 3:30); *they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils* (Matthew 12:24). Jesus said that He is the Son of God, working miracles by the power of God, but they attributed his message and power to Satan. They denied the power and word of God, and gave Satan the credit for what the Holy Spirit was doing.

THE WHOLE VERSE

Dear seeker of God, don't be so concerned about the last part of Jesus' conclusion that you overlook the lesson of the first part. Jesus plainly said, "*All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men*" (Matthew 12:31), and, "*All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men*" (Mark 3:28). If there is a sin of which man may not be forgiven (according to the last part of verse 31), and man isn't sure what that is, may we suppose that those sins which are forgiven him (according to the first part of verse 31) are forgiven whether he knows it or not? How are those sins forgiven? Consider John's enlightening contribution to this discussion.

The disciple whom Jesus loved (John 21:20) didn't record the incident in the crowded Galilee house, nor the parables and their conclusion which are detailed by Matthew and Mark. He did, however, write plainly concerning sins which are forgiven and sins which are not forgiven. First John 5, verses 16 and 17 read as follows:

If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

How is it that some sins are "unto death" and other sins are "not unto death"? Is there a list of sins that would teach us how to so categorize sins? No, nothing of the sort. John himself, by the

inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has written the answer so that none need fear or doubt:

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (I John 1:8-9).

There's your answer. The sin that is forgiven – the sin that does not lead to (spiritual) death – is that sin which the person confesses to God in repentance. The sin that is unto death – the sin that is not forgiven – is that sin from which the person does not repent – which he does not confess, or admit, to God. But what does this have to do with the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit?

DEFINITIONS AND ANSWERS

The word “blasphemy” means “speech against.” In this context it refers to persistent rejection of the word and power of the Holy Spirit in Jesus. As Jesus stood in their midst working miracles and proclaiming the kingdom of God, those scribes and Pharisees continued to deny both His words and the source of His power. Such a sin cannot be forgiven simply because they were not confessing it as a sin, and repenting from it. As long as a person persists in such a position he voluntarily excludes himself from pardon. God will not forgive those who will not repent – He will not force anyone to be saved against his own will – but “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (II Peter 3:9).

Jesus continued to plead with the scribes and Pharisees to “make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit” (Matthew 12:33). He was requiring them to make up their minds: was it good that Satan was cast out of the blind and dumb man, or was Jesus an evil man? They were trying to have it both ways, and that just isn't possible. They weren't thinking about what they were saying. That's

when Jesus said to them (and to us): “ But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matthew 12:36-37).

God gave the Bible that we should think about it (Psalm 1:1-2). He sent Jesus into the world for our serious attention and contemplation (Matthew 22:42). The gospel of salvation requires careful hearing and honest evaluation (Philippians 4:8) – and then sincere faith and obedience (Romans 10:8-21).

Some people who have told me that they have committed “the unpardonable sin” have, by such claim, intended for me to understand that there was no point in my preaching to them, since they could not be saved anyway. There is none so sinful that he cannot repent any time he chooses to do so. There is none who repents who will not instantly be forgiven by the merciful God in Heaven. Don’t try to hide behind the ignorance or deceit of those who have mis-handled the word of God, teaching you that there is a sin for which you can never be forgiven even if you repent. Repent and obey the gospel. We stand ready to assist you; contact:



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