

Reading: Matthew 12:22-37

Theme: A sin that cannot be forgiven!

There are people who feel they have done too much wrong to be forgiven by God. They want to be forgiven, but they do not feel God can forgive **their** sin, the things they have done, thought or said. Others have a saving trust in Jesus and yet may fear their wrong and guilt are not really totally forgiven and they struggle with many doubts, fears and lack assurance they will get to heaven. Perhaps someone here feels like one or the other of those ones I have mentioned. Other people have a totally different concern, worry and it is concerning the unpardonable sin - for there is such - as we touch on in this passage. Christians of many years standing can wonder, worry if they have committed the unpardonable sin and are damned! In the passage we read, these Pharisees come close to or actually committing such. As we look at this passage, I have 3 main headings to look at v22-37 to help us understand them:

1. The Amazing Miracle. (v22-23)

A poor demon possessed man is brought to Jesus and this possession has also affected him physically - he is blind and dumb. We need to note that this was an extreme possession to affect the man's physical well-being. Disease, pain, suffering and the like are seldom attributed to demon possession except in exceptional cases. The NT writers recognise this fact and distinguish between such. This poor man was afflicted with blindness - he could not see to help himself; he was afflicted with dumbness i.e. he could not speak and could not ask for help, but he was also demon possessed and couldn't control himself. He was in a pitiable condition and he was brought to Jesus by others who knew of what Jesus had done, was doing and believed He could do.

The Bible teaches that all of us are spiritually blind to God, to the things of God. To become a Christian is not about understanding the Bible, but of needing to have our spiritual eyes and understanding

opened. Neither can we say fine religious words to impress or move God to help us - if we were confronted by God, we would be speechless! The Bible also says mankind is under the domination, controlled by the unseen and yet real devil and we are naturally drawn to the wrong, like iron filings to a magnet. and drawn away from God. We all need to go and can go to the Lord Jesus to have this blindness, dumbness and bondage removed. Many here have done that, have you? It could be you haven't and have not known or experienced this spiritual work of God personally in your life. If you've been to this church before, you will be brought to the Lord Jesus in prayer by people here in the church, for we know the good He can do for you, for He has done it for us!

This poor man was wonderfully, amazingly healed and all the people recognised it was a miracle and they questioned in astonished way *“Could this be the Son of David?”* In other words, was Jesus the long-expected Messiah! They saw the miracle, were amazed by it and ask this question, but its form in the Greek expects it to be answered *“No”!* They saw the evidence, put 2 and 2 together, but had the wrong answer and say in effect *“He can't really be the Messiah, can He?”* Yet the evidence was clearly there!

Maybe someone here is questioning Christian things. Many of the young people here have been brought up used to Christian things and you may be seeking or questioning if it is real and true for you. Other people here may be questioning, seeking, checking things out for themselves, for the things of God, which may never have really bothered you before and are now becoming important to find out about. I'm glad if it is so. I urge you to come, question and check things out; Jesus welcomes honest seekers and questioners. He wants you to know a personal relationship with God through finding out exactly who Jesus is. Do not come to see the evidence and then, no matter what you see, you are determined to dismiss it! The Pharisees

were like this and they dismissed Jesus' amazing miracle here and they make:

2. The Serious Charge. (v24)

When the Pharisees saw the man healed as the demons were cast out, they spoke to each other, saying Jesus did such by and through Beelzebub i.e. the devil, the prince of demons. They accused Jesus of being in league with the devil and made out He was really an evil and wicked man. They also said this in Matthew 9:34 - it was no new attack on Jesus and His person. These ones doubted it could have been from God, but He was not of God and accused Him of demonic, satanic powers, which meant they could conveniently dismiss Him, His works and teaching. It seems they did this quietly, kept it to themselves and this serious charge was caused by envy. They had no time for Jesus and blasphemously speak of His works and miracles.

We have to be careful that we, in our opposition, our dislike or disapproval of others, that we do not speak ill of them and do not delight in any evil spoken or heard about them – juicy scandal - true or not! We are to take pleasure in the good, dwell on the good and not be party to rumours or slander. More importantly, we are to be careful not to wrongly dismiss or lightly hold the works of God in others or ourselves, so treating lightly the very work of God, especially concerning who Jesus truly is. Moving on we see:

3. The Charge Countered. (v25-37)

Jesus knew their words and thoughts and publicly speaks to counteract these secret charges - so that the Pharisees would have no grounds of going on in their accusations and to show them He knew their accusations and hopefully cause them to stop and think about what He was saying, causing them to consider who He truly was. He counters this charge of *casting out demons by Beelzebub* in 5 ways. Let's look briefly at these. Jesus says that the charge is:

A. Absurd: I think that's a good word, it means ridiculous, foolish, pathetic, unreasonable. Jesus shows in v25-26 that their claim was absurd - Satan v Satan! Charles Spurgeon says "*whatever faults the devils have, they are not at strife with each other; that fault is reserved for servants of a better Master. Oh, that divisions in the church were not so many.*" It is an unreasonable, absurd charge they made and it, if it was thought about, would not hold water as a charge. Jesus then went on to say the charge is:

B. Inconsistent: in v27 Jesus points out that their "*children*" (AV), "*people*" (NIV) drove out demons and they were approved by the Pharisees! No doubt the Pharisees took their fair share of credit and glory for such, probably they praised these who did the exorcisms. Jesus says that the charge against Him was inconsistent - "*Yes, okay, fine, wonderful*" to those they'd influenced, but "*No, sinful, demon possessed*" is used when Jesus did it!

They did not judge with true judgement, but were biased against the ones they did not favour and for the ones they did favour. Jesus calls on the people to judge fairly - if the Jewish exorcists and the people agreed with their teachers - the Pharisees, then they would condemn themselves, along with the Pharisees who supported and applauded them. Yet if they disagreed with the Pharisees, then they vindicated Jesus. The Pharisees' charge was not thought through and it was inconsistent.

We have to be careful we do not say absurd and inconsistent things because we are prejudiced against people, even against Christ and the things of God. People have said that they cannot believe in the God they cannot see, yet in almost the next breath express their belief in UFOs, horoscopes, the paranormal and even evolution which has never been seen or measured! This charge was shown to be one which:

C. Obscures: it was that which obscured the real truth of the matter. It was like a smokescreen to hide behind, or a diversion to take your

attention from things. Here it allowed the Pharisees to take refuge and comfort in their decision that it wasn't really by God that Jesus did this miracle.

The Lord Jesus challenged them in v28 to really see what was happening there. They were not to let the false charge obscure their realisation of the truth, that it was by the Spirit of God and it meant that God's kingdom had come among them. God was at work in a mighty way. In v29 Jesus uses the illustration of someone trying to rob a strong man's house - he's not going to help you! You will have to overpower him, tie him up to do this. If Jesus was casting out demons, then surely, He was more powerful than the devil and the only one more powerful than the devil is God Himself!

Jesus in v30 shows their attempt to obscure the truth by basically saying "*You are either on my side or against me!*" Neutrality was not possible - then or now. Whose side are we on at this moment? If we are not a Christian then we are, unknowingly and unwittingly, on the devil's side. If we are not with Christ as a believer, we are against Him and instead of gathering with Him, we are scattering lies against Him. Jesus is at war with the devil and those on the devil's side. Whose side are you on? A word of warning must be said here, the devil's side is and will ever be the losing side.

D. Unpardonable: Jesus in v31-32 points them to the danger they were in. He speaks of the greatness and extent of God's forgiveness if people seek such (v31a), but He also warns of the unpardonable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which is even more serious than speaking against the Son of Man i.e. Jesus. All sins, no matter how deep, offensive, or how dirty can be forgiven - except the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

What is meant by blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? Does it mean that the Holy Spirit is more God than the Father or the Son? Not at all. Does it mean He views slander as more sinful against the Holy

Spirit than the Father or the Son? No, because the 3 are 1 and all are mocked, insulted, injured in any blasphemy. So why is the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit singled out as the unpardonable sin? All sin can be forgiven - David's adultery, lying and murder were; Peter's triple denial of Jesus was; Saul of Tarsus' murderous persecution of the church and blasphemy against Christ was. So, what is this that cannot be pardoned?

The Holy Spirit is the One to reveal and glorify Christ to men, women, boys and girls. By His presence and power, He comes and reveals Jesus, His love, His grace and salvation to us often so gently and lovingly. He convicts us of sin, judgement and righteousness; He guides and leads us into all truth. Here in these verses, a glorious, amazing miracle of God's power and grace had been carried out. People were astonished and recognised Jesus as remarkable, possibly the Messiah - the Son of David. God's power was evident, but what do the Pharisees do? They harden their hearts, there is no repentance for their sin, they despise Jesus and what He'd done. They plot, cling to their own ideas and ways as they curse, slander and mock Jesus. They deliberately chose to ignore the evidence of God's power, grace and mercy at work.

They stubbornly resist God and His ways when they have every evidence, when all ground of ignorance is removed, when God has shown them powerfully in an unmistakable way that this is so and Jesus really is who He claims He is. They then turn around and accuse Jesus of being in league with Satan and their accusation turns good to evil and light to darkness.

Here is this deliberate denying of God, His work and ways; a mocking, a neglecting of such, a **stubborn refusal** of heart to go for pardon and life from God. This is blaspheming against the Holy Spirit - His gracious, gentle and yet powerful work of making the Lord Jesus and the way of salvation known. These Pharisees were

bordering on such, if not doing such! It is not a case of unwisely, foolishly, unknowingly using the name or person of the Holy Spirit as a swearword, or as a joke or even as a drunken curse. Such is blasphemy, but it can be forgiven. The ones most at danger of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit are not immoral, ungodly, worldly people, but you who are brought up in Christian homes, who regularly sit under God's word preached, you who have been taught in Sunday School, young peoples; who know of God and His ways. Such ones can hear of God's way of salvation, be touched, moved, influenced by the work and person of the Holy Spirit, but as you see your need of the Saviour, know you must believe **but then** you harden your heart, refuse to believe. Although you may not say so, you mock Christ and the Holy Spirit and treat such things as worthless and not for you.

I want to urge all here – young or older, do not harden your hearts, do not delay and put off making your peace with God by trusting the Lord Jesus as your own Saviour. Don't mock the work of God the Holy Spirit in your life, for God would be perfectly just to say *"If that's how you want it, that's how you will have it!"* He could so easily abandon you, leave you alone and never bother your conscience again - leaving you go on to hell. Thankfully He doesn't do that unless He is severely provoked, for He is still a patient, gentle and loving God, but that is no excuse to delay - as the offer of the gospel may come and touch your life and it could be for the last time. The Bible urges us to realise that today, now is the day and time of salvation. We are not to delay, but believe, trust in the Lord Jesus as our Saviour and then we know that this unpardonable sin will never be ours. See Jesus' final counter argument:

E. Exposes: it exposes the hearts of the Pharisees and what they were like. They were bad trees and their fruits were bad. They brought out from the treasure chest of their hearts evil things and their words showed their antagonism against God and Jesus. Our words reveal

what is in our hearts i.e. the true us and what we are like. It's not a case of changing our language and not saying evil, nasty things, even stopping swearing, but having our natures changed and so become a good tree and produce and show good fruits.

Jesus here tells us that judgement will be on our words as they reveal our true nature. By birth we have a corrupt, bad nature and we need that changed. It is changed when we trust the Lord Jesus as our Saviour and then evidences that change. We are given new life, made a new creature. Instead of the fruit of the flesh, we are to produce the fruit of the Spirit - *“the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”* (Galatians 5:22-23).

Jesus exposes the charge of the Pharisees; exposes their real nature. What would He say of us? What fruit do we bear? What do our words – including our thoughts, express about the real us? We may fear we are a bad tree and be condemned. If that is our case, then take heart and consider how Jesus has spared you to hear the gospel message again and the gospel offer comes to you to go and trust Him as your Saviour. The Lord Jesus may have shown you your need and He has done it so that you would go to Him. He truly, gently and lovingly invites, calls you to Him. I pray that we would all hear, obey and we would know our sins forgiven, have peace with God by trusting Jesus as our own Saviour and then we go on to live for His glory in our lives as He further goes on helping us by the work of the person of His Spirit in us.