

The Unpardonable Sin

Evangelism 101

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This evening, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the gospel of Mark 3, and tonight we have the privilege of discussing probably one of the most debated, most discussed subject matters in all of Christianity. It is an issue, it is a subject matter that has the title "The Unpardonable Sin," and tonight we're just going to walk through Mark 3, though there is a parallel passage in Matthew 12 as well as Luke 11, and we're going to address some of the issues surrounding this subject matter. It is my goal, it is my hope, it is my purpose for us to leave tonight with our security found in Christ Jesus and the word of God, not in our emotions, our feelings, or what somebody else might possibly say.

Mark 3, beginning in verse 22, it says,

22 And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils. 23 And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26 And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. 27 No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house. 28 Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: 29 But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: 30 Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

Now for the sake of context tonight, I know we've been walking through the gospel of Mark on Sunday mornings, but prior to and following this passage there is story after story after story of Jesus performing miracles, doing that and teaching that which is completely contrary to the scribes, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees. As we studied this morning, we have a man with a withered hand who they did not question whether he could be made whole, the problem was how can a man claiming to be God do so on the sabbath day which is of God. And so tonight, I want to walk through this passage just

very systematically here in dealing with the subject matter what is addressed is: what is this unpardonable sin, can one commit it, and if one does, what would be the end thereof?

I want to begin with what is the accusation. What are they accusing of Jesus of being? Now this is important. No one questioned what he was capable of doing. No one doubted that he walked on water. No one questioned whether the food was actually multiplied. You cannot dispute and discredit that which you have seen before your very eyes. They did not question what he did, they questioned the means by which he was able to do so. So what do they say in verse 22? That "he hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of devils he casts out devils." For those of you that are literary fans, the term Beelzebub also can mean Lord of the Flies, attributed to not only the realm of but to the authority of Satan himself. In simplistic terms here is the accusation: they are claiming that everything that he is doing whether it is the healing of a withered hand, whether it is the deliverance of an unclean spirit, is by the power of Satan himself.

That is the accusation. Here is the argument that Jesus lays before them in verses 23 through 27, this very famous, as it says, parable about a house being divided and Satan being against himself, Jesus Christ utilizes what we formally would call today presuppositional apologetics. Now I know that's one of those big phrases. Let me break it down real simply tonight. We have two ways of defending the faith. If you and I were to claim that our faith in Jesus Christ, our belief in scripture is true against those who claim it is not, there's one of two ways that you can do so. One is called evidential and one is called presuppositional. Evidential means this, that you have facts and I have facts, let's see whose facts can outweigh the other's facts. I want you to note that Jesus Christ did not utilize that methodology. Why? Because when you're dealing with somebody has hardheaded and as obstinate as these guys, no amount of facts will ever change their mind. They're always wanting one more piece of information. These are the same individuals that in the same context as this in Matthew 12 will ask Jesus to show them a sign, a withered hand being healed, multiplied food, walking on water is not enough, we want something even more than this.

So Jesus Christ understood that one more quotation from the Old Testament wasn't going to be enough so presuppositional means to show that one's argument cannot be true because its premises are false. It is a brilliant strategy that Jesus Christ utilizes and we're going to use it again tonight as we come to the end of the passage. He does not lay out one more Bible verse or one more piece of evidence, he basically says this, "If you claim that I deliver according to the power of Satan, why would Satan want to eliminate his own forces? If you claim I'm an agent of hell itself, why would hell want to empty its own compartments?" In other words, he was simply showing them that their claim could not be true because if it were true, it would be contradictory to the goal of the claim. Essentially what Jesus said was this, "Even if this were the case, it could not be the case because it would defeat the purpose of the case." A brilliant strategy that we're going to use in just a moment to talk about this "unpardonable sin."

Verses 28 through 29 deals with the explanation of this unpardonable sin. It says, "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." Tonight, I want to deal with what I believe are the four most commonly utilized assumptions of what the unpardonable sin is. These would be claims that if one were to go in this direction, that their eternal state is forever sealed and done with even though they're still breathing on planet earth. Again, we're going to use the same methodology that Jesus Christ used, we're going to talk about what these assumptions are, what these positions are, what the unpardonable sin could be according to them, and then we're going to look at the argument much like Jesus did and say how could that be true in light of this.

The four assumptions that I hear the most often when describing the "unpardonable sin," the first one is what I call repetitive sin. Basically what it states is if you, I, or anybody else has a struggle with a specific sin that they cannot gain victory over, they continue to fall, they continue to be trapped, they continue to go down that pathway, they never experience deliverance from it, that they must have committed the unpardonable sin because somehow, somehow God is not bringing that which they desire, God is not bringing deliverance. They continue to walk the wrong path and therefore somehow grace has been exhausted. The question I have presuppositionally tonight is this: so what's the number? Is it 100 times? Is it 1,000 times? Is it 10,000 times? Even in Matthew 18 when asked how many times we should forgive, Jesus said 70 x 7 and basically insinuated continue to do so. In fact, in Psalm 103:12 it says that when the Lord forgives our sin, he places our sin as far as the east is from the west.

Now let me remind you of Romans 6 before I go where I'm about to go. Romans 6 says how we continue in sin that grace may abound. God forbid, how shall we that are dead to sin continue any longer? In other words, we should never have the disposition of, "Hey, I know the Lord's gonna forgive me so I'm gonna do it anyway, it's not a big deal." However the thing I want you to understand is according to Psalm 103:12, when you fall into that sin for the 101st time and you confess it to the Lord, biblically speaking it's as if the Lord is saying, "That's the first time I've ever heard of this." Yet from our perspective, we see somebody else or even ourselves who continues to fall in the same trap and we think, "Well, because they have not gained victory, it must be unpardonable. There is no hope for them."

The second category, so to speak, or assumption is what I call egregious sin. It's not about the quantity of repetitive sin, it's that this one scenario has occurred, this one situation, this one prohibition has taken place in somebody's life and it is so egregious that there's no way that forgiveness could be attained. Can I share with you how people come to that conclusion? It's one of two ways, either A., they cannot forgive themselves for something they have done, or B., they cannot forgive somebody else for what they have done. When we see what somebody has done to us or to somebody else, we see it as so egregious that we can't forgive them so there's no way God could. By the same token, I've dealt with numerous people who are so grieved and bothered by their own sinful state and behavior of days past because they cannot forgive themselves, surely somehow God cannot forgive them. Let me remind us of James 2:10. It says if we have broken one of the laws, it's as if we've broken all of them, and one of our greatest struggles as humanity is we love to

categorize and put levels or, shall we say, stages or means of sins so that some are greater than others, less than others, and there is always in some people's minds that one sin that if that were to be committed, I can't forgive it so neither can God even if it is myself.

The third category is one that I call unrepentant sin. Now this may sound kind of muddy compared to the other two but let me flesh this out. The concept of unrepentant sin is the idea that if you breathe your last breath and you have not confessed your last sin before God, then there is no hope for you. Now let me share with you the difference in this one and the first two. The first one makes the statement that we don't gain the victory, we continue to fall in sin so therefore we must have committed the unpardonable sin. The second one makes the statement that we can't forgive ourselves or others so therefore they must have committed it. The third one says that even though I think I'm "good" with the Lord, if death comes upon me and I have not confessed all of my sins before him, then I am in a negative position. Oftentimes the phrase or the word "suicide" would be utilized in this position because one were to commit the act of murder of oneself, obviously without confession, then they would fall "naturally" into this category. Here's the problem with this position is it presumes that you confessed it all even right now. If I were to ask you right now, "Have you come clean before God on everything?" You might say, yes, the problem is you don't keep as good of records as God does and we just presume, "I'm good with God." In fact, we heard this in "the old days." Have you ever heard somebody who was somewhat older in age and beginning to "slow down" physically start spending more and more time alone saying, "I'm getting right with my Maker"? That's an old statement for somebody "calling it out," making sure everything is cleaned up. I've got news for you: you're going to miss one. There's no way because there are times according to scripture that it's not what we did "wrong," it's the good or the righteous thing that we missed out on that is accounted for sin.

1 John 1:9 makes a very simple statement, "If we confess our sins he's faithful, he is just to forgive us of all unrighteousness." When we speak about unrepentant sin, understand that argumentatively the moment that one confesses their sin condition and asks Jesus to save them, then he has saved them from their sins in relationship past, present, and future, the issue is about fellowship, the issue is about a daily walk, the issue is about the daily communion with, not the actual technical relationship of.

Then last but not least, I call it the sin of rejection. Now you're going to notice on the screen tonight that I do not have a Bible verse for this one and the reason is very simple. I didn't want to put it on the screen so I'll just tell you verbally, this is what I call the televangelist position because there are times where certain individuals who tend to have, shall we say, multimedia ministries, claim that what they're promoting or what they're raising funds for has been directly guided by the Holy Spirit and if you don't believe it, if you're not on board with it, or if you don't give to it, they will threaten you with committing the unpardonable sin. The reason I didn't give you a Bible verse is because there's not one. It is just this mentality that God has spoken to them or somebody about a certain issue and that if you reject what the Holy Spirit is doing through them, much like we just read, then you're guilty of blaspheming the Holy Ghost.

Those are the four major categories that I have been exposed to with people who would advocate for others or even themselves the position that they have committed what we know as the unpardonable sin. So let's deal with the actual terms. There is the what and there is the who. What does it say has occurred here? There is blasphemy. Blaspheme is one of those words that just kind of gives you chills saying the word, much less hearing it. It means to do that which is to vilify or to speak evil of. So when we talk about something that was blasphemous, in simplistic terms you're just saying it is evil, you're vilifying it. Who is the "who" here? Against the Holy Spirit. It's interesting because in the context here, he basically says, "You can blaspheme the Son of Man but don't blaspheme the Holy Ghost." So the actual terminology that's being utilized is to speak evil of the Lord's working and moving in one's midst. That's the specifics that's being spoken of.

So tonight, the question that has been asked throughout the ages we're going to give the answer to. How does somebody do that? How do you blaspheme the Holy Ghost? How do you according to Matthew in danger of hellfire not only now but in the days of all eternity? Believe it or not, did you know that this issue of the unpardonable sin, the answer is not given in Matthew and it's not given in Luke. The only passage in the gospels that gives the answer to the problem is in the gospel of Mark. Look in verse 30, "Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit." When somebody says, "Well, I think the unpardonable sin is..." you can stop them right there. According to the Bible, the unpardonable sin is when somebody claims that Jesus Christ has an unclean spirit.

Now let me transition to the actuality of this actually taking place in one's life today, the possibility therein. You may or may not be familiar but about a decade ago there was a website that was created, there was a YouTube channel that was originated entitled "The Blasphemy Challenge." Basically it was a collection of atheistic minded people who decided to put the word of God to the test. They would film themselves claiming that they had blasphemed the Holy Ghost, they didn't believe in the Holy Ghost, they didn't believe in God, etc. etc. etc. You can go and I don't encourage you in this, only to research it, trust me, it is out there and people frequent it often. Here's the problem. The answer in verse 30 isn't a denial of the Holy Ghost, it isn't a lack of belief therein, but the actuality is claiming that what Jesus Christ did in their midst was Satan working and operating through him alone.

So tonight in "conclusion," I want to talk about the actuality. Can you, can I, can any of us actually commit the sin that's spoken of in this passage? I want to deal with three very important words: the facts, the faith, and the feelings.

Let's talk about fact for just a moment. Do you have the ability right now to do what these men said or did? Do you have the ability to watch Jesus Christ walk on water and say that's the devil doing that? Do you have the ability to see him take a withered man's hand during a church service, make it whole, and say that's the devil in the church? Do you have the ability to see him multiply food and claim that it is of the enemy Beelzebub himself? Why is that important? Verse 30, "Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit." I don't want to over-contextualize this passage but what we see happening here is Jesus performing miracles in a variety of means and those who were observing and those that

were present attributing what he was doing to the power of Satan himself. You and I have a record of his miracles, you and I have a testimony of his miracles, but you and I do not have the real-time opportunity to see this operate and in motion and then claim it is of the devil himself. It is very difficult, I would claim biblically, for you or I to technically actually do what these men were doing in Mark 3.

The second issue is the issue of faith. One who would "commit" the unpardonable sin according to Mark 3 would be somebody who was operating within the realm of faith but then committed a sin of faith that would then void them of the faith. I want to encourage you if you have the ability to turn over a few pages to the right to the book of 1 John 2 and I want to deal with that angle from another perspective because there is the question of the facts, the actuality, do we have the ability in the 21st century to even do what Jesus was claiming they were doing. The second one is the aspect of as a person of faith, can you who claim to have faith actually commit a sin to void out one's faith.

In 1 John 2, beginning in verse 18, it says, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." Listen to verse 19, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." In other words, there are some who are living a life of shame claiming they used to be a believer, they used to be this, but now they've committed some sin of some caliber and they've lost that relationship with the Lord for all of eternity. According to what you just read, that is not a biblical possibility. It basically says if you've departed from the faith, it's because you were never an adherent or a believer in the first place.

And last but not least, there is feeling. Oh, feelings. They so often cause us to doubt and to question and to stray. I want to conclude on this one because this is what I hear the most of in people's personal lives, that even though they believe Psalm 103:12, their sins are as far as the east is from the west, even though they believe James 2:10 that it doesn't matter what one has done, they're all equal to any other sins, even though they believe 1 John 1:9 that if they confess he is just to forgive them, there is the feeling, "I don't feel as if I'm in the 'relationship.' I don't feel. I don't this. I feel as if..." What it's basically saying and here is where the feeling comes in, when one says, "I don't feel it," what they're basically stating is, "I understand the character and the justice of God and I don't have the right to be who I am in Christ but it is by grace that I am." Here's what I mean by that. Oftentimes people say, "I just don't feel saved. I just don't feel it." Let me ask you a question: do the feelings change the facts? Now I'm not trying to get overly personal in your life or in mine, but if you've been married over a week, there's times you don't feel married but that doesn't change the facts, does it? The feelings do not and cannot void the facts.

And allow me to share with you one last observation. I have yet to find anybody in your New Testament who comes to Jesus, the Apostle Paul or anybody else in any type of authority, and ask the question, "Am I still saved after what I did?" Do you know what the question is? "What must I do to be saved?" That's the question they ask. Nicodemus

asked, "How can I be born again?" The rich young ruler asked, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Time and time again. Again, I know that every person deserves a one-on-one conversation when it comes to this struggle and I offer that to you, but can I give you a very broad observation? If you've ever had the question or the statement, "How can I be saved if I've done what I've done? How can Jesus really love me if I've done what I've done," or whatever you want to word that. Can I basically tell you there's a pretty good chance you're still saved because lost people don't ask that question. Lost people don't ask, "Am I saved?" Lost people ask, "How do I get saved?" And I believe tonight that the reason a study of this subject matter is so important is because the devil has used "the unpardonable sin" to put more believers in the shackles of yesterday so that they can't live for the Lord today, so bothered by what happened a year ago, so consumed with what happened when I was a young person, all they do is spend their time dwelling on what did or didn't happen while the Lord is desiring for them to live in the present. One of the greatest tactics that the enemy has ever created in the "family of faith" is he has sown the seed in our lives that somehow we've done something to void out the goodness and the grace of Jesus Christ which last time I checked, he made it very clear was able to cover not just a multitude of but all of our sins, and much like our earthly relationships, the facts don't change even if the feelings do. Whether it be in our marriage, whether it be with our children, or whether even it be with our Lord, when there has been a sinful disposition, when there has been an act of transgression, the relationship hasn't been voided but the fellowship has been strained and that is when we must go confess and repent. The relationship is still what it has been but the fellowship will increase.

The unpardonable sin. Biblically it's there. Practically for you and I, I would daresay it would be a rare day at best that we'd ever have to worry about it. Can we tonight tell the enemy to take his lies back to the pit where he brought them from?

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. Tonight, maybe you're that individual who says, "Pastor, I understand about the unpardonable one but I've never called on Jesus the first time in my life." Can tonight be that night? Maybe you're here in person, maybe you're online, maybe you're listening by way of the airwaves, maybe tonight is just that night that the devil has sown the seeds of lies in your life to such a degree that you've never believed the truth. The truth is this: Jesus Christ loves you and is willing to save you no matter where you've been, what you've done, or who you did it with. And maybe tonight is the night where you just call on him and ask him to save you and forgive you. But maybe tonight, Christian believer, saved person, born again individual, maybe tonight you are sinking in the emotions of days past and the emotions and feelings of that which has been done and that which has been neglected, may tonight be a night where you rest assured in, "Thus saith the Lord," and not, "Thus saith my feelings. Thus saith the Lord, not thus saith an opinion or an idea." May tonight as we come to this conclusion, may we trust the Lord and his word and nothing else.

Lord Jesus, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for the facts of your word. Thank you that you supersede our feelings and our emotions. So God, tonight, may we trust in you, may we cherish you, may we rest our today, our tomorrow and our eternity in you and you alone. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.