

“The Unpardonable Sin – Part 1”
Mark 3:19-30
(Preached at Trinity, January 20, 2009)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we saw last time, in this section Jesus once again finds himself in conflict with the scribes. Multitudes have crowded around Him. He is performing miracles. He is preaching the message of the Kingdom. More and more people kept coming. It became so intense that He was not even able to eat. Some of those close to Him were beginning to think He’d lost His mind. Taking advantage of the situation the scribes declare Him to be possessed.
Mark 3:22 – “And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.”
2. Jesus described the absurdity of their position. If Jesus was casting out demons by the power of Satan then it would put Satan fighting against himself. This would be ridiculous. Instead, Jesus by His own power has entered into Satan’s stronghold and is destroying his kingdom. It demonstrated the blindness of the Scribes.
3. Then Jesus makes one of the most solemn statements in all of Scripture.
Mark 3:28-29 – “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:”
4. Jesus is describing what has been described as the unforgivable or unpardonable sin.
 - A. He begins by using the formula we see often in the Gospels. This is the first of the 15 times Mark records it. **Verse 28** begins with the word, ἀμήν
 1. The KJV usually translates it “verily.” Most modern translations translate it “truly.” It means “Of a certainty.”
 2. Obviously all of Jesus words are truth but there were times when He made statements of the greatest importance. This was a statement of absolute truth upon which eternity rests.
 - B. Mark is telling us that all sort of sins can be forgiven.
 1. This isn’t speaking of universalism. Jesus is making a wonderful statement of hope for ever sinner. For those who repent of their sins and trust in His righteousness they shall be forgiven.
 2. Jesus is saying that every type of sin can be forgiven.
– sexual sin, divorce, murder, drunkenness, robbery, abortion, suicide, the persecution of Christians, even blasphemy. Jesus has purchased pardon for the greatest of sins.
 3. **Isaiah 1:18** – “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”
No matter how terrible your sins, though red like crimson Christ is able to make you white as snow.
Christ is full of mercy to all who call upon Him. He will abundantly pardon.

4. The word for “forgive” literally means to send away. We can see it illustrated with the scapegoat of Israel. The sins of the people were symbolically placed upon the goat which was then sent away into the wilderness symbolizing the carrying away of the sins of Israel.
5. With the sacrifice of Christ our sins have been fully removed.
The Psalmist writes:
Psalm 103:12 – “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.”
Our sins have been sent away as far as the east is from the west.
- C. But there is one sin of which Mark says you can never be forgiven. There is one sin for which there can be no pardon.
Mark records that Jesus speaks emphatically.
- D. The question is, to what is Jesus referring? Mark refers to it as “blaspheme against the Holy Ghost.”
 - (1) The scribes would have certainly had an understanding of blasphemy. They understood it as anything that profanes the great name of God. It was punishable by death.
 - (2) But what was this blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, a sin so vile there can never be forgiveness? The answer still causes us much confusion. What is this unforgivable sin? How do you know if you have committed it?
5. There have been many positions throughout the years.
 - A. The Roman Catholic church divides sins into venial and mortal sins. Mortal sins are damning to the soul. Venial sins can be finally purged in purgatory. There is absolutely no support for purgatory in Scripture. And this passage isn’t talking about a particular sin like murder, adultery, or suicide.
 - B. Some limit this passage to the Old Covenant or to a different dispensation.
H.A. Ironside, probably second behind C.I. Scofield in popularizing dispensationalism – “This was a dispensational sin, and we may say definitely cannot be committed, at least in exactly the same way, by individuals today.”
John MacArthur also holds this position.
 - (1) There is a sense that they are right about it taking place in a different dispensation. Matthew adds an unusual statement to this passage:
Matthew 12:32 – “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.”
 - (2) The distinction between blaspheme against the Holy Spirit and blaspheme against Jesus was only relevant before Calvary. This distinction does not apply today. During the earthly ministry of Christ there was much confusion as to His identity. His identity was in many ways veiled. Even His family was confused. His glory was veiled.
Some said He was Elijah, some John the Baptist, the scribes said He was of the devil. Even His disciples sometimes wondered at it all.
 - (3) We must be clear, this is a sin that can be committed today. Jesus is giving a solemn warning that applies to our generation as much as it did to the generation to which Christ was speaking.

- C. Some have said the unpardonable sin is the rejection of Jesus. But what about Peter and what about Paul – both rejected Jesus. You can reject Jesus at one point of your life and then receive Him at another.
- D. Charismatic and Pentecostal people have often said it is the rejection of their understanding and experience of the Holy Spirit. This isn't what Jesus is referring to here.
- E. Some have taught that this is a sin that a Christian can commit. It is not! This is purely Arminian. They teach that a Christian can turn from the teachings of Christ and lose his salvation and be forever condemned. This warning does not apply to true believers although all of us should continue to press on with all our strength. We must never presume upon the grace of God.
Philippians 2:12 – “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”
6. Let me tell you what Jesus is referring to; what this unpardonable sin is. What Jesus is referring to here is the deliberate rejection of the saving power of God against the clear revelation of the Spirit of God. It was openly denying Christ against the clear knowledge of Him. In other words it is knowing all of the facts of the Gospel as presented by God's Word as revealed by the Holy Spirit and deliberately and persistently rejecting it.
7. The Scribes and Pharisees had the fulness of God's revelation. God had given His prophecies to them.
Romans 3:1-2 – “What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit *is there* of circumcision? ² Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.”
Romans 9:4-5 – “Who are Israelites; to whom *pertaineth* the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; ⁵ Whose *are* the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ *came*, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.”
- A. They had the prophecies about the Messiah. Jesus had fulfilled them all. And what was there conclusion about Jesus? They said He was Satanic!
- B. With all this revelation they turned away from Christ. They blasphemed the revelation of the Holy Spirit.
8. In addition, He was clearly revealing Himself
- A. Yes, Jesus had veiled Himself most of His life. For 30 years He grew and matured. He labored as a carpenter. His parents had little idea that He was God in the flesh. For the first year and a half of His ministry He commanded demons not to speak. He commanded those healed not to tell. He spoke in parables. His identity was largely hidden.
- B. But look at what was going on in Galilee. They were being given an unveiled view of the work of Christ. He was performing miracles that could only come from God. He was casting out demons demonstrating His authority over Satan. Most important, His preaching was clearly teaching the nature of the Messiah and of His Kingdom. He sent word to John the Baptist:
Luke 7:22-23 – “Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. ²³ And blessed is *he*, whosoever shall not be offended in me.”

- C. Sinners were being transformed. The work of the Holy Spirit was being poured out abundantly in Galilee. And how did the scribes respond?
1. When Jesus forgave the sins of the paralytic the scribes accused Him of blaspheme.
 2. When Jesus received the publicans and sinners the scribes snarled at Him for associating with the low life. It is interesting that these publicans and sinners had known little of Jesus before but now they received Him while the scribes knew much about Christ and railed against Him.
 3. They ridiculed Jesus for not fasting and accused Him of being evil for plucking wheat to eat on the Sabbath.
 4. And now they were declaring that Jesus was possessed of the devil. They said Beelzebub was at work. They were blaspheming the work of the Spirit of God.
9. The unforgivable is to see the clear revelation the work of Christ as illuminated by the Holy Spirit and reject it.
For such an attitude there could be no forgiveness.
10. How is this applied to us today?
- A. Jesus is plainly preached today. There is nothing veiled.
Hebrews 1:3 – “Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;”
 - B. As pertaining to salvation, the Word of God is clear and understandable even to the most unlearned person. The Gospel goes forth and is clearly expounded. To persistently reject this is to risk committing the unpardonable sin.
 - C. In other words, a person who persists in rejecting and dismissing the clear revelation of the Gospel – who persists in denying Christ, they are in danger of being given over to their corruption by God.
Never again will they be stirred by the Gospel. They will sit under a clear and passionate sermon of hope and salvation and simply yawn and ask, “When’s lunch?”
11. But this would take years of denial, right? Jesus’ ministry at this point has been going on for about 18 months. The scribes were now in danger of eternal hell fire.
Mark 3:29 – “But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:”

Conclusion:

Next time I will apply this further. If you are here tonight and have not received Christ my plea is for you to give your life over to Him without delay.

^{NAS} **Hebrews 3:7-12** – “Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, “Today if you hear His voice, ⁸ Do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, As in the day of trial in the wilderness, ⁹ Where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, And saw My works for forty years. ¹⁰ “Therefore I was angry with this generation, And said, ‘They always go astray in their heart; And they did not know My ways’; ¹¹ As I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’” ¹² Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God.”