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The Unforgivable Sin

Selected Scriptures

Prayer: *Father, we just again thank you for who you are, thank you for what you've done, thank you for the gift that consists of what we are enjoying right now, Lord, your church. Thank you for the gift of your word and the gift of your Holy Spirit. Lord, and again, we're going to embark on a new series today, and again I pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit as we open up your word. Lord, we recognize that if you don't accompany us, this is a fool's task. And so we pray that you would give us the presence, the gift of your presence and the ability to make this of permanent value. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, like I said, this is a new series we're starting. We're going to be looking at the parables of Jesus, but before we get into those parables, I want to first explain why Jesus actually started speaking in parables and then to examine what is perhaps the most difficult words that Jesus ever spoke and why. We're going to be looking at what Jesus referred to as "the unforgivable sin." But first some background. We're going to be looking at

Matthew 12 and Matthew 13 to a time when Jesus is kind of midway through his ministry. He's already begun to attract huge crowds due to his teaching which is profound and yet understandable. I mean, the crowds that heard the sermon on the mount, they heard the beatitudes, they've heard many of his simple illustrations, but something profound happened in Matthew 12 and it changed Jesus's approach, his teaching style, it changed it for the rest of his public ministry. And what was simple, what was easily graspable became riddle-like, became filled with mystery. And the first ones to notice were his disciples and they became dismayed at this sudden change, and I just want to describe how this all came about.

Jesus told a number of parables in Matthew 13 that seemed very simple to us. I mean, we've had 2,000 years of teaching, 2,000 years of explanation to back it up. But understand, Jesus' original hearers did not have that benefit. And the scripture itself states that many if not -- if not most of his hearers, including his disciples, became mystified as to the sudden change in his teaching style. In fact the scripture often details how Jesus's disciples, they would take him aside, and they would ask him why are you doing this? For example, Jesus warned the church in one of his parables, he gave them a future warning by telling them the parable of the wheat and the tares. It's about how an enemy sowed weed seeds in a person's field. This is *Matthew 13*. It

says: *Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went on his way."* And he goes on to say that the owner of the field told the servants to let the weeds and the wheat grow together until harvest times and we hear them, we say, oh, yeah, the wheat and the tares, we were familiar with that. The tares happened to be a weed that looks just like wheat and so they were going to grow together and Jesus says let them grow together until harvest time. We get all of that because we've been given the instruction as to what all of that means. But when Jesus first gave this parable, he gave no further instruction, no further insight. I mean, so we get what Jesus is talking about, he's talking about the fact that all churches will consist of true and false believers, they're going to all look identical, they're going to grow together, and at one point God is going to separate them at the harvest. But that's a lesson that went right over the heads of the disciples. In *Matthew 13:36* it says: *Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, "Explain to us the parables of the weeds of the field."* And they asked Jesus to explain it because they had no idea what he was talking about. If the disciples who are actually living with Jesus don't understand what he's saying, imagine what his hearers are thinking. We don't have any sense of the drama and the trauma that accompanied this new

Jesus who's now speaking in parables. But understand, the disciples' ignorance of what Jesus was doing was profound and it was genuine. Jesus had never spoken like that before. Well, there's far more to this story than meets the eye or ear, as a matter of fact. And if we look at the beginning of Matthew chapter 13, we get a hint of what took place that caused Jesus to speak in a way that almost no one could understand.

This is *Matthew 13*, starting at verse 1. It says: *That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables.* Well, one of the most important statements in this scripture occurs in the very first three words. It's those words "that same day." So we understand that this passage is introduced as occurring in the middle of something, and so we say, okay, what "same day" is scripture referring to? Well, the Bible doesn't announce it and there's no fanfare, there's no exceptional notice but this was a judgment day for Israel. This was a profoundly terrible day that had been literally centuries in the making for Israel. For centuries the cup of God's wrath had been slowly filling up, and then something happened that very day to put the wrath over the top. *Exodus 34* says: *"The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,"* but it

also says: *He does not leave the guilty unpunished.*

So to find out what happened on this day of judgment for Israel, we have to actually go back a chapter to Matthew 12. There we find Jesus, he's teaching and he's preaching and he's healing as he's been doing many, many times before. And just as before, he's being dogged by the Pharisees who were watching his every move. Jesus's fame had grown and everywhere he went crowds were following. The Pharisees see their religion franchise as being deeply, deeply threatened. Worse yet it's being threatened by this no name so-called illegitimate son of a peasant woman named Jesus of Nazareth. And whenever they engaged him, they quickly learned that he has far greater wisdom and strength and power than they even imagined, so they very quickly learned to fear him and to hate him. In chapter 12 of Matthew's gospel the Pharisees confront Jesus about eating grain on the Sabbath. Jesus turns around and he confronts them about worship from the heart instead of by rule keeping and then entering the synagogue he sees a man with a shriveled hand. The Pharisees take that opportunity to challenge him, and they say, "Is it lawful to heal someone on the Sabbath?" Jesus responds. *He said to them, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."* Then he said to

*the man, "Stretch out your hand." So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus. They're no longer interested in dialogue, they're not interested in argument, they're not interested in debate. I mean, each time they tried that, Jesus wound up making them look silly. The possibility that Jesus actually was who he claimed to be never seemed to have even occurred to them. The only thing they recognized in Jesus is this existential threat and nothing more. So now they finally reach the point where they realize there's no hope about arguing or outsmarting this preacher, they have to kill him. They have to get rid of him. Well, Jesus moves on, healing as he goes, and he's brought a demon-possessed man who is blind and mute. Jesus heals the man and he casts the demon out of him and it is here that the beginning of judgment day for Israel starts. It all started and ended with a jealous outburst by the Pharisees. One final wicked statement by them wound up filling up the cup of God's wrath to overflowing and this is what was said. This is *Matthew 12:22*. It says: *Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. All the people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons."* Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every*

kingdom divided against itself will be ruined and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven either in this age or in the age to come."

Now you wouldn't know that this was judgment day from some type of external type or sign or reaction, there's no flash of lightning, there's no peal of thunder, no earthquake, no firestorm, but that statement by the Pharisees was literally the straw that broke the camel's back. You see, the kingdom, the kingdom had indeed come just as Jesus had said it would, and they clearly and specifically rejected it.

John MacArthur points out that God from the very beginning has ruled this world mediatorially. What that means is that God has ruled his kingdom through human mediators. God has been absolutely faithful through all of those he has chosen to rule through, and we have been absolutely faithless in the way we've responded to that rule. God started his mediatorial rule, he started it in Genesis in the garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. God said: *"Have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moving on the earth."* Well, that was the start, that was the start of the dominion God gave to his mediators, but that dominion wasn't enough. Adam and Eve rejected God's rule, through them they turned the kingdom over to the ruler of this world, Satan, and from that moment forward there's been two kingdoms, and we talk about it all the time, these two kingdoms that are in conflict, and ever since that time we have been absolutely faithless towards the mediators that God has chosen. After Adam's fall our rejection of God became so complete that only Noah and his family, who were God's mediators, only they survived the judgment by God on the entire world through the flood. *Genesis 6* says: *Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and he was grieved in his heart. So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth,*

both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." Well after the flood, we responded to God by constructing a tower, and it was a tower uniquely designed to be flood-proof. I mean it was known as the tower of Babel and it represented the entire human race shaking its fist in God's face. *Genesis 11* noted that all of the world had a common language and God said: *"Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them."* God says the whole world consists of one people with one language and one common enemy. The enemy was the one who created them. The enemy was God. So God's response is to divide and conquer and he splits us into different language groups that now battle each other alongside of God. God then began to mediate and rule through the patriarchs, through Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the rest. The nation of Israel once again proved faithless. You know, God frees his people from Egypt and they respond by rejecting him for a golden calf. He sends prophets and we stone them and we torture them and we execute them and yet still he guides, he leads and protects his nation until God himself becomes flesh and dwells among us as a mediator. Jesus came to earth to establish his kingdom as its rightful king and perfect mediator and after years of public ministry, the religious leaders of that nation once again irredeemably reject him. It wasn't an edict. It

wasn't a pronouncement. It was a clearly articulated insult. Verse 24 says: *But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons."* They had committed what is known as the unpardonable sin. They had attributed to Satan what God had done. And it was Jesus himself who said that's unforgivable. He says: *"And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven."*

Well, I think we need to get to the bottom. What are we talking about when we say "unforgivable sin?" You know, I once heard somebody arguing with somebody about speaking in tongues. They were having a back and forth as to whether or not it's of God. And the person who was against tongue speaking was making his case and he said you have no control of what you're saying, and you don't even know if it's the devil speaking instead of God. The other person went, "You might have just said the unforgivable sin! You might have just attributed to Satan what was of God." Folks, that's not even close. That's not what God was talking about at all. The unpardonable sin is not a word or a sentence or a statement made. It's a condition of the heart. Jesus said in *Luke 6: The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.*" You see,

the Pharisees' statement that Jesus heals by Satan's power was an overflow of their hearts that had become blind and deaf to the truth no matter how obvious that truth had become. You see, it's the Holy Spirit who convicts us of truth, and blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is repeated, hardened determination to refuse that spirit each time he speaks. I mean a blind, mute, demon-filled man fully restored, that's the Holy Spirit shouting. The Pharisees' response was a willful decision to go deaf.

Tim Keller points out what looks like an apparent contradiction in *Matthew 12*. Jesus says: *"Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven."* Jesus appears to be saying that every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven but this one will not. As Keller says: *"Shouldn't Jesus have said, well, almost every sin and blasphemy is forgivable,"* I mean, why didn't Jesus say that? You have to understand, Jesus is speaking here from two different perspectives. He's speaking externally from God's perspective and internally from man's perspective. Speaking from God's perspective, God is saying I will forgive any sin brought to me with repentance. That's what we speak about each month in communion when we quote *1 John 1:9*: *If the we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* What God is saying is categorically there is

virtually nothing that we can do that is unforgivable. I mean, just look at the cross. At the cross people are spitting, nailing and crucifying God himself. Jesus' response is: "*Father forgive them.*" And what could possibly be worse than that? Well, the second statement that Jesus makes: "*but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven,*" that's an internal statement. That's a statement man -- made from man's perspective. And it's never about a one-time utterance that forever damns you. Instead it's about an attitude that refuses repeatedly to respond to the Holy Spirit.

You know, a while back there was a group of Internet atheists and they wanted to demonstrate how little they feared the claims of Christianity so they mounted what they called "the blasphemy challenge." I don't know if you've ever heard of that.

Individuals were encouraged to make a YouTube video in which they denied the Holy Spirit. They were encouraged to go on camera and blaspheme the Holy Spirit rendering, so they thought, these folks with unforgivable sin. There was some 830 people who responded. Some 830 people made videos of themselves blaspheming the Holy Spirit for the purpose of demonstrating how little they cared about the seriousness of this sin. They were atheists. They didn't believe in God, they didn't believe in the Holy Spirit, but they also didn't understand the unforgivable sin at all. See, the fact

is any one of those 830 people who wished to confess and repent could do so, and by the blood of Christ they would be instantly forgiven. What would render their blasphemy unforgivable is not the fact that they said something in front of a camera for a YouTube video but an ongoing refusal to allow the Holy Spirit to convict them of that sin. That's when that sin becomes unforgivable. John's gospel tells us it's the Holy Spirit's job to *"convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment."* Well, speaking against God's Spirit continuously renders any sin whatsoever unforgivable because it cuts off the conviction that leads us to seek forgiveness in the first place. And whether it's crucifying the Son of God, making a blasphemous YouTube video or stealing a paper clip, the results are the same: You cannot be forgiven for a sin that you will not acknowledge or confess. So that sin or any sin for that matter becomes unforgivable. You say oh, what if I forgot? What I didn't remember? God takes care of that. There's actually parts in Deuteronomy that deal with sin you have not remembered or not recall. But what the Pharisees did here was they took an extreme example of God's goodness and power, the casting out of literally a demon and they attributed it specifically to Satan, so in essence what they're doing is they're telling God there's nothing that you can do, including the miraculous, to change our determination to reject you. And from that moment forward, Jesus began to speak in parables. It wasn't

just some new kind of teaching technique. It was a profound judgment from God. And no one was more shocked than the disciples at how Jesus now spoke. You got to remember, Jesus at this point was so well known as a teacher and as a doer of miracles that in this ministry, crowd control had become a huge problem.

And so we pick up the story at Matthew 13. It says this: *That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched and since they had no root they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear."* Well, the first thing we see, as I mentioned, crowd control had become a very large problem. The solution that somebody came up with is that Jesus is now going to preach from a boat in the water and the crowd will gather on the shore. Well, the reason why crowd control was such a problem is because Jesus had spoken and lectured and taught at

great length and his teaching was so accessible that great crowds accompanied him wherever he taught. That's what they thought they were going to hear this day. So now today he's addressing this massive crowd and instead of the content that he delivered in, say, the sermon on the mount or the beatitudes or in telling folks how to pray or to judge others, instead he gives this five-minute lecture on farming no less, and then he leaves the crowd with this incredibly cryptic statement. He says: *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."* Well, the crowd is clueless. Mind you, this is the only thing he said. We've had years of explanation of what this means. Jesus didn't give him that. He just gave them the raw story. So the crowd is clueless and they're totally mystified. You know, folks had come from far and wide to hear this incredible preacher to say something everybody already knows? Oh, great, birds eat seed. Big deal. Shallow soil and weedy soil doesn't produce good crops. Good soil produces good crops. Are you kidding me, Jesus? I came to hear that? I mean you think this crowd didn't know that already? What in the world was Jesus talking about? I mean it wasn't just that the crowd was mystified, the disciples were blown away. I think they were incredibly embarrassed, to tell you the truth. Says in verse 10: *Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?"* Well Jesus's answer is so profound, it's easy to miss. This is what he said: *And he answered them, "To you it has been*

given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case the prophesy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: "'You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.'" For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.' But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

Well, in three sentences in this answer Jesus gives the disciples a privilege, a principle, and a pronouncement. First let's look at the privilege. Jesus' response to rejection by the Pharisees was to now extend his mediatorial rule, rejected over and over again by God's people, he's now going to extend it to the disciples. They, and not the religious crowd or the crowd itself, would be given the secrets to the kingdom of heaven. See, the Pharisees' contention

that Jesus's power emanated not from God but from Satan sealed their fate. I mean it shouted that their hearts had become like stone and it caused Jesus to begin speaking in parables. And when the disciples ask him why, he describes to them their privilege, and he tells them by telling them that they were the next mediators who God would now be ruling through. Verse 11: *And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given."* Jesus is beginning the process of turning his mediatorial rule over to his church. See, the new mediators of God's covenant with man would be the body of Christ, his church, established and founded by the Holy Spirit through his disciples. That was the privilege *"given to you but not to them."* And it's a privilege that we here today enjoy. You see, God still mediates his kingdom and his rule through covenant communities. He does it through communities founded by the men who desperately ask Jesus that day, *"Why do you speak in parables?"* Well 2,000 years after that day Jesus' answer to us is the same answer he gave the disciples. I mean we've just been told we've been given this amazing privilege. God says you, you see the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven. In 1 *Corinthians 2* it says: *But as it is written: "EYE HAS NOT SEEN, NOR EAR HEARD, NOR HAVE ENTERED INTO THE HEART OF MAN THE THINGS WHICH GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM."* But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches

all things, yes, the deep things of God. You know "for God so loved the world" is silly nonsense to the rest of the world. 1 Corinthians says: For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. See it's not foolishness to those who are being saved.

Well, the next thing that Jesus describes in Matthew 13 is a principle. It's a crucial piece of information that tells us how the kingdom responds to those who reject it. And if you don't know how to understand this principle, you're not going to know how to respond when people do reject the gospel. This is what Jesus says. This is how he gives them the principle. He says: *"For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away."*

Now you got to admit the first time you hear this, what? What's he saying? What does that mean? Well, if these words sound familiar, it may be because Jesus repeated them twice more, once in the parable of the talents, once in the parables of the minas, the stewardship parables. In the parable of the talents, Jesus says to the one who buried his talent: *"For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them."* In his parable of the minas in *Luke 19*, Jesus says of the servant who hid his mina: *He*

replied, "I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what they have will be taken away." Well, we know that this is an important principle because Jesus has repeated it at least three separate times. So we say what does this mean? What does Jesus want us to learn through this? Well, simply put it means this, it means the ability to discern truth grows or shrinks depending on how you receive truth. The more you embrace truth, the more your capacity for more truth increases. Whoever has will be given more. Conversely, the more you reject truth, the more your capacity for truth will shrink.

"But as for the one who has nothing, even what they have will be taken away." See God says that our capacity to see and hear truth is fluid. He says our capacity changes. Spiritually speaking that's exactly how God describes the eyes and the ears of those who see and hear truth and reject it. You see, they don't just shut out the truth, they also shut down their ability to perceive truth. I mean think of a light aperture on a camera. You know, if you go out on a sunny day like today and the light's really bright, you know you need to shut down that aperture to limit the amount of light going into the camera otherwise you're going to ruin the picture. On the other hand if it's almost dark and the light is minimal, you have to open up the aperture so that a lot more -- as much light as possible gets in. Well, in a manner of speaking, rejecting the gospel literally shuts down your spiritual aperture,

making it harder for the light of the gospel to get in. And again, not to stretch the analogy but if you consider the apostle Paul, you know, the apostle Paul repeatedly rejected the light as he persecuted the church, and each time he did that, he shut down his spiritual aperture a notch. Again: *"As for the one who has nothing, even what they have will be taken away."* So we see this scene of Jesus finally confronting Paul on the road to Damascus and you recall, it's a light so bright that it blinds Paul for three days. And again, I'm stretching an analogy here but in a manner of speaking, Paul's aperture was so closed down he needed a blinding light in order to see the gospel. What it's saying is reject the spiritual truth of the gospel and you will grow progressively deaf and blind, just like the Pharisees. I mean have you ever wondered why the older folks get, the more difficult it is for them to grasp the gospel? I think it's because the more times you hear it and reject it, the harder it becomes. That's why it's very rare to see people in their 90's becoming born again. It's much easier to see that in people's 20's and 30's. You see, reject the truth and you will eventually get to the place where you will attribute the very miracles of God to acts of Satan.

And finally Jesus gives a pronouncement. He does this in verse 13, he says: *"This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they*

understand." You see, rejecting truth eventually causes eyes to no longer see and ears to no longer hear, and the results for the Pharisees was spiritually fatal. And so it leads us to this big question and that is if the privilege is given to some and not others and the principle is that rejecting spiritual truth shuts down your ability to perceive additional truth and the pronouncement is that seeing, they will no longer see, and hearing, they will no longer hear, well then how can anyone who hears and rejects the gospel be saved? Well the disciples had that very same question. Jesus once ran into a rich young ruler who claimed that he had lived a life worthy of heaven. This is *Luke 18*. It says: *So when Jesus heard these things, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."* But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, he said, *"How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."* And those who heard it said, *"Who then can be saved?"* Well, those who heard it were his disciples and they believed that if you were wealthy, if you were rich, you were clearly enjoying the blessing from God, you were clearly demonstrating God's approval. So they're stymied, they're stunned at this notion that the wealthy would find that their

riches are now a hindrance to heaven instead of part of God's blessing? So the reasoning, well, if the wealthy don't make it into heaven, then who in the world does make it into heaven? In fact how does anybody get into heaven? Jesus gave them the answer that's become our marching orders. In verse 27 it says: *But he said, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."* See, it took a miracle for light to penetrate into Paul's blinded eyes. But miracles are not really a problem for God. I mean I think of my own situation. Like Paul, I had rejected the light of the gospel over and over again. Unlike Paul, I mocked those who attempted to share the gospel with me. See, my light-sensing aperture had been pretty much shut down before, by God's grace, he just blasted it open. I mean there's no question in my mind that it took a miracle for that light to penetrate my blinded eyes as well. But here's the critical part for all of us. It took people, human beings, to present that miracle to me. I mean I'm thankful that those who presented the gospel to me didn't look at my hard heart and throw up their hands and just give up. I mean, at the time that they presented the gospel to me, the whole idea that God would consent to become a man, that he would live out a perfect life and then he would go to the cross and offer up that perfect life in payment for my sin, and that I could exchange my sin for his righteousness and stand before God now perfect because of his righteousness and not mine, that whole idea was foreign to

me, was ridiculous. And I was locked in the throes of what could have been the unforgivable sin. I was actively resisting the Holy Spirit. But God proved that his grace is greater, that my resistance was resistible.

You know C.S. Lewis talks about being dragged into the kingdom of God kicking and screaming. John Piper talks about irresistible grace this way. He says: "I was dead and you're dead apart from God. What God does then is take the blind, dead soul that has zero spiritual light or interest, and he opens the eyes -- and what you see is Christ: No longer as foolish, no longer as stupid, no longer as boring, no longer as disinterested, no longer as false. You see him and his cross as compelling, and powerful, and wise, and beautiful, and wonderful, and you cannot not receive him. That's what it means to see him as compelling. That's what I mean by irresistible. At that moment, your resistance is conquered. You were resisting God all your life, until the Holy Spirit opened your eyes and granted you an irresistible sight, which you feel so free when you make that choice. Up until that time, you were enslaved, up until that moment, you were bound, and dead, and in chains of darkness. And he rips the chains off, and he opens your eyes, and out of freedom, for the first time in your life, you do the right thing. You embrace him. He's beautiful."

You know, God describes another beautiful thing, that's our role in this process. Listen to what he says in *Romans 10:13*. He says: *For "WHOEVER CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED."* How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: *"HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO PREACH THE GOSPEL OF PEACE, WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!"* You see, whether it's speaking or praying or sending, you and I have the privilege of bearing those beautiful feet to folks who may well be in the way of committing the unforgivable sin. Next time we'll see how, by God's gracious grace alone, we can reverse that before it's too late. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for who you are. We thank you for your incredible graciousness. We thank you, Lord, that there is no sin that is unforgivable provided we confess it and repent of it. And Lord, we see outside these doors an entire country and culture that is locked in unforgivable sin simply because they refuse to seek your forgiveness. Lord, we're in an impossible situation where those folks out there are blind because the god of this world has blinded the eyes of unbelievers so they cannot see the glory of Christ and yet you have told us that your means of dealing with the impossible is miraculous power that makes all things possible.

*Father, give us the strength and the courage to simply trust in you
as we share that good news. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*