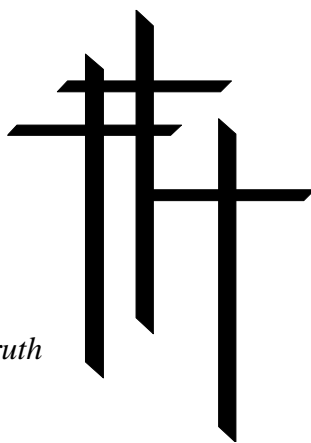


Timely Messenger

*Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth
Speaking the Truth in Love*



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THE UNPARDONABLE SIN — PART 2

By Gregg Bing

“Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.” (Matt. 12:31-32)

What did Jesus mean when He spoke of “the blasphemy against the Spirit” in these verses? The

word “blasphemy” means to speak words which cause harm or injury to someone, that which hurts, particularly, the reputation. Jesus’ words of warning regarding this sin against the Holy Spirit were directed specifically to the Pharisees, Israel’s religious leaders. By asserting that Jesus’ authority or power to cast out demons came from Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons, rather than from the Holy Spirit, the Pharisees clearly spoke blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:29-30). Their words, however,

were more than just words; they were a reflection of these men’s hearts. Jesus went on to tell them in verse 34:

“Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”

These were evil men whose words reflected the feelings and intents of their hearts. As a result, we see them taking their stand “against” Jesus (Matt. 12:30), even plotting “how they might destroy them” (Matt. 12:14).

While Jesus’ warning was spoken to the Pharisees, the warning was not issued to them just as individuals, but as rulers of the nation of Israel. As we look more closely at this passage in Matthew 12, we find that this sin against the Holy Spirit, which Jesus said would “not be forgiven men,” was not a sin that could be committed by individuals, but one that an entire nation, the nation of Israel, would commit in response to God’s offer of

their promised kingdom.

When some of the scribes and Pharisees proceeded to tell Jesus, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You,” He answered them, saying,

“An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.” (Matt. 12:39)

Jesus was not referring to the Pharisees alone, but to the entire nation of Israel at that time, for the hearts of Israel’s rulers were representative of the hearts of the people of Israel during that generation.

As Jesus would later stand before Pilate, the Roman procurator, into whose hands the Jewish rulers delivered Him, this evil and adulterous generation of Jews would cry out: “Away with Him! Away with Him! Crucify Him!” (John 19:15). Thus, the Lord of glory was crucified on the cruel cross of Calvary. Though it was God’s determined will that Christ die on the cross for the sins of the whole world, the hands

that delivered Him up were described by Peter as “wicked” or “lawless” hands (Acts 2:23).

Yet, as Jesus hung there on the cross, the first words that are recorded that He spoke were these,

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34)

Though that generation of the nation of Israel, had blasphemed the Son of Man, Jesus prayed for mercy and forgiveness for this sin, and we find His prayer is answered during the Acts period.

The ascended Lord Jesus Christ poured out the Holy Spirit upon the nation of Israel on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), just as the Old Testament prophets had foretold (Isa. 32:15, Ezek. 39:39, Joel 2:28-29, etc.). The twelve apostles, being filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit, were sent to proclaim to Israel the truth concerning Jesus of Nazareth—that He was their Lord and Christ, and that though He had been crucified, God had raised Him from the dead.

The Holy Spirit confirmed the truth of the apostles’ message with accompanying signs (Mark 16:20).

During one of Peter’s early messages, he brought this indictment against the people of Israel:

“You denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.” (Acts 3:14-15)

Peter went on to say, “Yet now, brethren, **I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers**” (Acts 2:17). Here is the reason why that generation of Israel, including their rulers, was forgiven for their blasphemy against the Son of Man; it was just as Jesus had uttered from the cross: “They know not what they do.”

During the Acts period, Israel was given another opportunity to repent and believe in Jesus as their Lord and Christ. The nation was instructed by Peter to:

“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before.” (Acts 3:19-20)

If that generation of Israelites, as a nation, which would include their rulers, had repented of crucifying the Lord Jesus Christ, God would have sent Jesus Christ back to earth to establish His kingdom and Israel would have ruled and reigned with Him, just as they had been promised in the Old Testament Scriptures.

How did the nation of Israel respond? The priests and Sadducees laid hands on Peter and John, “being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead” (Acts 4:2). Though they could not deny the miracles that the apostles were working, they were determined to stop their preaching and so they commanded them, “not to

speaking at all nor teach in the name of Jesus” (Acts 4:18).

The twelve apostles refused to heed this command and continued their ministry in Jerusalem as the Holy Spirit worked through them.

Later, the Jewish leaders, filled with indignation, laid hands on all twelve of the apostles, put them in the common prison, and asked them,

“Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine and intend to bring this Man’s blood on us!” (Acts 5:28)

Peter and the other apostles answered,

“We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we

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Gregg Bing — Editor

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*Thanks for your help
in this matter!*

AN INFORMAL SURVEY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

A Dispensational Approach

By R. B. Shiflet

II PETER

I. INTRODUCTION 1:1

- A. The Author
 - 1. A Servant
 - 2. An Apostle
- B. The Addressees

II. INVOCATION 1:2-4

- A. The Petition
- B. The Power
- C. The Provision
- D. The Promises

III. IDEAL SPIRITUAL LIVING 1:5-7

“And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.” (2 Pet. 1:5-7)

The first key word we find in this passage is *add*. It comes from an interesting Greek word that has a very picturesque background. In its noun form, it was used of one who paid for a chorus to perform. The ancient Greeks, especially the Athenians, produced lavish plays. Each play required a very large, very expensive chorus. The wealthy men who paid for these performances were entitled the *choregos*, which is the noun form of the word translated *add*. It came to mean “to furnish lavishly.” So the Holy Spirit, through the pen of the Apostle Peter, is telling his readers to equip themselves lavishly with the virtues in the passage.

The starting point is faith. We are saved by faith and without faith it is impossible to please God. To faith, we are to add (equip ourselves lavishly with) virtue. This word means purity or moral excellence. It should be the identifying mark of a Christian.

We rejoice in salvation by grace through faith and are thrilled to proclaim the grace message, and we should never adulterate this message. But we should also remember that this “salvation by grace through faith” is unto, or for the purpose of, good works.

Next in the sequence comes knowledge. This is *gnosis*, the ordinary word for knowledge, especially the practical knowledge of what pleases God and what we should avoid in our Christian walk.

The next virtue is one that is missing in our 21st century culture. It is temperance, or self-control. It was used primarily of controlling our passions. It is that virtue that controls its desires until they are sanctified in holy marriage. It is that which makes possible faithful commitment of one man to one woman “till death do us part.” Our culture today, controlled largely by Hollywood and the media, is based on instant gratification. We are reaping the harvest of STD’s and illegitimate babies, one parent homes and conditions that breed crime. Unfortunately, these evils have crept gradually into Christian communities as well as the world. Not since the Roman Empire have we seen society so given over to selfish gratification of the lusts of the flesh. But this self-control is also needed in child rearing. Our children must be taught respect for authority and respect for age. When I began teaching in the public schools more than 50 years ago, practically all the parents were very cooperative with the teacher. Our “discipline problems” were the children talking to each other, chewing gum, or running in the hall. Not once did it occur to us that a child might bring liquor, drugs or a gun to school. Now most city schools have one or more policemen on duty, and guns and bombs are becoming commonplace. The child who does not recognize parental and school authority is very likely to grow up resisting the authority of the laws of the land.

(To Be Continued)

Eleventh Avenue Church — Mineral Wells
54th Anniversary Services
Sunday, March 7, 2004

Pastor R.B. Shiflet and the Eleventh Avenue Church in Mineral Wells will celebrate 54 years of service to the Lord as a local church on Sunday, March 7, 2004 with special services at 10 and 11 A.M., a lunch at Noon, and a service at 2 P.M.

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are His witnesses to these things, and **so also is the Holy Spirit** whom God has given to those who obey Him.” (Acts 5:29-32)

When the Jewish leaders heard this response, “they were furious and plotted to kill them,” but Gamaliel, a Jewish rabbi, was used of God to intervene on their behalf. So, the Jewish rulers had the apostles beaten, commanded them not to speak anymore in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

Shortly after this, we find the Jewish leaders seized Stephen, a man “full of faith **and the Holy Spirit**” (Acts 6:5) who “did great wonders and signs among the people” (Acts 6:8). Being unable “to resist the wisdom **and the Spirit by which he spoke**,” they brought him before the Sanhedrin (council of seventy Jewish rulers) and set up false witnesses against him who accused him of blasphemy. As Stephen gave his defense before these leaders of the nation, he concluded

with these words:

*“You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! **You always resist the Holy Spirit**; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it.”* (Acts 7:51-53)

On hearing these words, the Jewish rulers “were cut to the heart and gnashed at him with their teeth” (Acts 7:54). They “cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him” (Acts 7:57-58). Following Stephen’s stoning, “a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the

apostles” (Acts 8:2).

Thus, the nation of Israel, led by their rulers, sinned against and blasphemed the Holy Spirit as He ministered through the twelve apostles, resisting His call to them to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. They had blasphemed the Son of Man, and yet were forgiven of this sin and given another opportunity to repent. But, when this generation of the nation of Israel blasphemed the Holy Spirit, they were not forgiven, and the offer of their kingdom was withdrawn.

This is the very situation dealt with in the book of Hebrews, chapter 6:

*“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and **have become partakers of the Holy Spirit**, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to*

an open shame.” (Heb. 6:4-6)

With the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon them, Israel had been enlightened. They had “tasted the heavenly gift,” having heard the “good word of God,” the gospel of the kingdom, and having experienced the “powers of the age to come” (i.e. miracles that will be experienced during the kingdom, cf. Isa. 35). But, the nation “fell away” and rejected the truth of the Word and “crucified again for themselves the Son of God.” They “trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified a common thing, and **insulted the Spirit of grace**” (Heb. 10:29). Having done this, it became “impossible” to renew them again to repentance. This did not mean that individual Jews could not still repent and be saved from their sins, only that the people of that generation would no longer have the opportunity to enter into the kingdom rest that had been promised to the

nation of Israel.

This situation was foreshadowed back in the Old Testament at Kadesh Barnea (Num. 13-14). The children of Israel reached the border of the land God had promised to give them. Moses was led of God to send twelve spies into the

land to see what it was like. All of the men said that the land was truly a land that “flows with milk and honey,” but ten of the spies reported that the people of the land were strong and their cities fortified and very large, and they con-
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cluded, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." Two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, disagreed, saying, "Let us go up at once, ... for we are well able to overcome ... the Lord is with us." When the people of Israel rejected the testimony of Joshua and Caleb, that God was able to give them the land, and listened, instead, to the other ten spies who said, "we are not able," then God pronounced judgment upon the people. They would not be allowed to enter the land He had promised them, but would, instead, wander in the wilderness until that unbeliev-

ing generation died off. When the people heard this judgment from God, they tried, on their own, to enter the land, but they were driven back. They could not enter in for the Lord was not with them. The promise of rest in the land had been withdrawn from that generation.

This is what Jesus was referring to in Matthew 12:32 when He warned Israel that, "whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come." That generation of the nation of Israel, having rejected the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and then the ministry of the Holy Spirit, were never

forgiven as a nation and could not enter into their kingdom. It will be a new generation, a still future generation of that nation, that will one day "look upon Him whom they pierced" and "mourn for Him." They will receive Him as their Lord and Christ and finally receive their kingdom promises.

So we see that Matthew 12:31-32 is not speaking of an "unpardonable sin" that individuals can commit today. The Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross and paid the penalty for all our sins. When we trust in Him as Savior, we are "made alive together with Him" and forgiven of "all trespasses" (Col. 2:13).

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