

## The Unpardonable Sin

Matt. 12:22-32

One of the things that you can do now that was never available before is you can ask google just about anything. This includes questions about the Bible. Before preparing this message about the unpardonable sin, I asked google, "What is the unpardonable sin?" I then read two excellent articles that responded thoroughly and accurately to the question. So let me begin with one issue that is often associated with this question but that was not addressed by either of the articles that I read.

One of the articles came close... it posed the possibility that murder or adultery could be regarded as unforgiveable sins but rejected each since David was forgiven for both of them. The sin that is often perceived to be the unforgiveable sin and that was not mentioned in either article is the act of suicide. The logic of the proposition is clear, If murder is a sin then it is clearly a sin to murder yourself. But if you murder yourself it is unlike any other sin since in any other case you could ask God for forgiveness but when you commit suicide, asking forgiveness is not possible and therefore suicide is the unforgiveable sin.

The argument is impressive but fails since the premise of the argument is that asking forgiveness after we have sinned is the only way that we can be forgiven for that sin. Remember that Jesus spoke forgiveness from the cross toward those who were crucifying Him. Their response was to keep on crucifying Him and yet, He forgave them. Speaking to the Ephesian believers Paul wrote, "In Him (Christ) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." He admonished the church to "be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." We can think of it this way, how many sins had you committed before Jesus died? When He died, how many of your sins did He forgive? All of them right? So, when Jesus died on the cross, He died for all your sins even the ones that you have not yet

committed. Should a believer in Christ commit suicide, he or she will commit a sin that Jesus has already forgiven. Suicide then, is not the unforgiveable sin.

The unforgiveable sin, by definition, is a sin that will not be forgiven for eternity. The one who commits the unforgiveable sin is condemned to an eternity in hell. Jesus defined this sin as blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. He spoke of this in response to the Pharisees who had called the miracle that Jesus had done by the power of the Holy Spirit a work that Jesus had done by the power of the Devil. It does not even seem possible that they believed themselves and yet they sought to persuade the crowds that Jesus did His works by the power of the Devil. In John 9 there is the dialogue that

takes place between the blind man and the religious leaders that demonstrated their absolute unwillingness to ascribe any good to Jesus despite the undeniable evidence that Jesus had miraculously done what was good, a work that by nature could only come from God. This is what Jesus called a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and the unpardonable sin. By definition, when Jesus called what they had done, "unpardonable," He then would no longer try to save them. They were unredeemable. They had taken a turn from which they could not come back. They were lost for eternity.

Compare this with the circumstance of those who participated in the crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus said from the cross, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." He implied that if the people had known that He was the Son of God and the Messiah then they would not have killed Him. Certainly, there were some at the cross whose sin had been the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit but we conclude that Jesus was not including them in His appeal to the Father to forgive. Only 50 days later Peter preached at Pentecost and after accusing the crowds of crucifying the Son of God He appealed to them to repent and be saved by becoming the disciples of Jesus. Crucifying Jesus was not the unpardonable sin.

But imagine that you had been there in Jerusalem and that you had been present when Pilate asked "what should I do with this man?" Suppose that you had joined with the other in your blood lust and cried, "Crucify Him!" Then, you were still in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost when Peter preached. You were convinced by his message that you had done a terrible thing and you repented

seeking God's forgiveness. You were one of the 3000 who were baptized on that day. Is it possible that you would look back and regret and even agonize over what you had done and yet, know that you could never reverse what had happened? You would be forgiven and yet still aware that there was in your past something that you would forever give anything to undo. In a circumstance like this we can only seek the grace that God gives for our present life. We can have the blessing of being forever humbled by our past. We can recognize that though some doors might have been closed by our former sins, others have opened providing a unique opportunity to live purposefully and obediently to the will of God as He reveals it to me, a forgiven disciple.

Some Biblical examples of sins that were forgiven but that closed doors in the lives of God's people include: Israel's refusal to enter the land when the 10 spies gave an evil report and Israel listened to them rather than to the good report of the two; Saul, whose sin cost him his throne even though his heir, Jonathon, was a righteous man; Samson, who was blinded and enslaved by the Philistines; David, who was not allowed to build God's temple because he had shed blood and many others.

It is crucial that we recognize the seriousness of life and the significance of our choices. The sins that alter the character of our lives may not be moral though they will always be spiritual. Take the young woman who is distracted and lazy and who despite her natural intelligence, does badly in high school when she could have had very good grades. Her sin of missing the mark will limit her choices when it comes to college and this will alter the path of her life in irreversible ways. She may regret her sin but she will not be able to undo it. In spite of this her life is far from over. She remains as intelligent as she ever was and she has the capacity to change direction and make the most of her opportunities just as soon as she becomes serious about her life. There is a life that she will miss because she blew it but can receive the grace to be humbled by her past, accept the doors that are closed to her while venturing through those that are now open. She can live obediently and purposefully, following God's will as He reveals it to her for she is a forgiven disciple.

Among these sins of missing the mark are lost relationships ruined by selfishness or infidelity or cruelty, careers lost because of addiction or carelessness or dishonesty, or friends lost because of neglect or ill spoken words, or faithless assumptions. In each case, water under the bridge is gone. It will not come back. And yet, the river still flows.

At some point, the lesson must be learned or the mistakes will continue to be repeated. Everyone has regrets. Not everyone learns from their mistakes. Apply these principles beginning today: Seek the grace God gives to those who remain always humbled by the mistakes of their past. Recognize the doors still open to you by the mercies of God and make the most of these opportunities. Live in constant consciousness of the will of God for you today and do it. Take your life seriously and live as one who knows that everything matters. Avoid making any further mistakes that you will never be able to undo.