

## **Blaspheming the Holy Spirit, Part 2**

Scripture: Matthew 12:31–32

Code: 2293

We return in our study this morning to the twelfth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. We're grateful to God for the truth that the Spirit has taught us as we move through this marvelous gospel. And this morning, we're looking again at verses 22 through 32 – Matthew 12, 22 through 32. We have entitled the passage "Blaspheming the Holy Spirit: The Unpardonable Sin."

Now the New Testament carries the very clear teaching that the Lord Jesus Christ lived in total submission to God the Father. That is a very explicit fact repeated again and again in the New Testament. In fact our Lord Himself, on many occasions, said, "I am come to do My Father's will. I am come to do the will of Him who sent Me." From the time that we first meet Jesus Christ as a boy at the age of 12, He makes it very clear the reason He came; He said, "I must be about My Father's business." In other words, Jesus Christ came into this world to do exactly what God the Father told Him to do. That was the key element in His humiliation. That was the key element in His servitude.

In Philippians chapter 2, we read this in verse 6 – Christ is in mind here – and it says, "He was in the form of God." Or the essence of God, and it speaks of His deity, "But He did not think it something to hold onto to be equal with God. But He made Himself of no reputation, took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Now Paul tells us in that great passage that Jesus Christ was equal with God, and we know from the clear teaching of Scripture that He was God, in every sense the essence of God. And yet when He came to earth, He took upon Himself the form of a servant. He humbled Himself and He became obedient. So clearly, the Lord Jesus Christ took the role of a servant. He voluntarily set aside the prerogatives of His deity, set aside His own, as it were, choices and allowed the Father's will to be expressed through Him.

Now that is pretty much clear, evangelical, orthodox, Christian dogma. But what you may not understand quite so clearly is the next facet, and that is that not only was He submissive to the will of the Father, but He was totally dependent on the power of the Spirit. He was totally submitted to the working of the Holy Spirit. He, mysteriously, the second Person of the Trinity set aside His own prerogatives as God, submitting Himself to the will of the Father and the power of the Spirit. Now we'll never understand all that that means, but in fact, those are the terms by which we can understand as much as our minds can handle. He was submitted to the will of the Father and the power of the Spirit.

Now when he began His ministry, if you go back a little bit in Matthew to the third chapter and the sixteenth verse, you find that this is indicated by the very initiation of His ministry under the power of the Holy Spirit. In Matthew 3:16, Jesus, when He was baptized, "He went up straightway out of the water. And lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on Him. And a voice from heaven saying, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'" Now there you have the Spirit of God descending on Christ at the initiation of His ministry; that is not to say that He did not have the Spirit prior to that. He was conceived by the Holy

Spirit, it tells us in the gospels. Certainly if John the Baptist, who was a human being, was filled with the Spirit from his mother's womb, so was Jesus Christ, who was God in human form. And so we believe that He was conceived by the Spirit of God, that He was indwelt by the Spirit of God, as in fact He was the very God in human form. So this is not to say that He didn't possess the Spirit; this is simply to say that there was a unique empowering by the Spirit for His ministry. And that began, you remember, at His baptism.

Now according to Mark chapter 1, immediately after His baptism, the Bible says in verse 12, "He was driven into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit." Now for the first time since His baptism, the Holy Spirit then begins to energize what He says and what He does and where He goes. You come along a little further and after His baptism, Luke tells us what happened next. Chapter 4 verse 14, "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit unto Galilee." So from the time of His baptism, the Spirit takes over the power and He moves Him out of the baptism into the wilderness, out of the temptation back into Galilee. He is under the power of the Spirit, Luke 4:14.

What happens? Immediately a fame of Him through all the region round about begins. "And He taught in their synagogues, being honored by all." The Spirit then, came at His baptism, led Him in the victory over Satan, and gave to Him a personage, a presence of person, with such power that He had fame and honor immediately. And then it tells us further in verse 18 that, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me," and Jesus is speaking here, "because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor." The Spirit of God then was the power in His preaching, as well as His teaching and His person. Just the magnetism of His person, as well as what He said, was energized by the Holy Spirit.

Also, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because . . . He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, to recover the sight of the blind, and to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." And in that verse you have His preaching and you have His healing and you have His deliverance from demons. All of it because "the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me." Now you have to mark that in your mind. When Christ came into the world in humiliation, He set aside His prerogatives and He became utterly a servant to the will of the Father and utterly a vessel to be used by the power of the Spirit, so that the Holy Spirit of God energized what He did in His ministry, from baptism through temptation and out of that into His teaching, preaching, healing, delivering. Everything He said, everything He did was energized by the Spirit of God. So when you looked at Jesus Christ and you evaluated Jesus Christ, in fact, you were evaluating the will of the Father and the power of the Spirit as manifest in His human form – the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now with that in mind, we approach this passage in Matthew 12. The Jews of Jesus' time had seen all of the miracles. They had witnessed all of the deliverances. They had heard the preaching; they had heard the teaching; they had seen the magnetism of the personage of Jesus Christ. There was no question about the evidence; there was little argument about the manifestation of divine power. But were they willing to give the Spirit the glory and the honor for what they saw?

Verse 22 gives us the activity that brought it all to a head. There was brought to Him a man possessed with a demon who was blind and dumb and also likely deaf. He healed him so that he could see and hear and talk. In other words, He not only brought physical healing, but He brought about a casting out of a demon. From the activity of verse 22, you come to the amazement of verse 23, "And the people were all amazed. And they began to say, 'This is not the Messiah, is it?'" I mean, it was a little hard to argue with His power, and so they began to wonder if maybe this wasn't the

Messiah. Well the amazement led to the accusation, because the Jewish leaders couldn't tolerate the people concluding this was the Messiah because Jesus was such a threat to their security that they immediately uttered an accusation in verse 24, "When the Pharisees heard it, they said, 'This fellow doth not cast out demons but by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.'" In other words, they said His power is satanic.

Now when they said that, who were they blaspheming? They were blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Right? Because it was the Holy Spirit that was ministering through Him. For in His voluntary humiliation, taking the form of a servant, He had given Himself over to the power of the Spirit. That then becomes the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. It is to speak evil against Him, and the most evil that you could possibly speak against Him would be to say that He is the Devil, that He is Satan. That is what they said about the power of the Spirit; that was their accusation.

The accusation then leads to the answer in verse 25. The activity brought about the amazement; the amazement brought about the accusation; and the accusation brought about the answer. Jesus has to respond to their accusation, and He does in three ways. First of all, He says, "Your accusation is absurd." It's absurd. And He says in verse 25, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand." In other words, He gives them a basic human truism: You can't survive an internal revolution. You can't survive the dividing of what you're trying to hold together. It can't be both ways. You cannot sustain a kingdom that you are dividing. You cannot sustain a city that you are dividing. You cannot sustain a home that you are dividing. That is an obvious fact of logic. Therefore, verse 26, if Satan is casting out Satan, he is divided against himself, and how is his kingdom going to survive? In other words, He says, "You saying that I do what I do by the power of Satan is absurd by the most elementary form of human logic." Now there are only two alternatives when you see supernatural power. It is either God or it is Satan. And if to say that it is Satan is absurd, then you're left with only one other alternative.

Secondly, He says, "Your answer is not only absurd, it's prejudiced." Look at verse 27. "If I by Satan" – or Beelzebub – "cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges." Now the Pharisees had certain disciples – called sons here – of their system who were going around in little groups believing that they were exorcists who could cast out demons. Of course, it's questionable whether they ever did that, but they thought they did, and I'm sure there were times when the demons let them think they did. And the demons may have been confused enough to enter into some certain chaos in their faces anyway. But it was not a genuine deliverance as was exhibited by Christ. And yet the Pharisees believed this to be a work of God. And so Jesus says, "They are doing on the surface the same thing I'm doing. You say they are of God and I'm of the Devil. That's purely arbitrary bias, and all that manifests is your prejudice. Your argument is absurd." And frankly folks, that ought to have ended the argument anyway. I mean, once you've determined that it's absurd, it's all over. But just to add insult to injury, He says, "It's also prejudiced. And the fact that you would come up with such an absurdity shows that all you are is prejudiced against Me."

And then thirdly, He says, "You're prejudiced because you are rebellious." And that's His third answer to them in verse 28. He says, "If I am casting out demons by the Spirit of God" – in other words, if this is God at work – "then the Kingdom is near. And the Kingdom is right here, and you're seeing the Kingdom of God in operation. I mean, if I'm doing it by God, then you are seeing God's Kingdom." And He gives them an illustration. If you're going to rob a strong man's house, you have to be able to tie up the strong man up to rob his house. And Jesus is saying, "If I can control the

demons of Satan, then I must be able to tie up the Devil himself.” See? “And if I am the one who can tie up the Devil, then God is in your midst. And your problem is that you are rebellious,” verse 30, “and will not be with Me, so you are against Me. You will not gather into My Kingdom, so you are scattering abroad.”

And so the activity led to the amazement, which led to the accusation, which led to the answer. And Jesus says, “You are absurd; you are prejudiced; and you are rebellious.” Then He adds the anathema. And that word means a curse. And this is the sum of it that we want to look at in verses 31 and 32, the anathema. And this is a passage that has confused many people and has been interpreted in all kinds of ways. I hope we can get some good understanding of it as we look at its simplicity in the context of Matthew 12.

They had cursed the Spirit of God, and now God through Christ is going to curse them. They have committed a sin that is unforgivable – unforgivable. Verse 31, “Wherefore” – in other words, based on all that He has said and all that has gone on – “I say to you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men.” Now stop there. “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men.” That is a very simple statement. Sin and blasphemy are, in a sense, distinct. Although blasphemy is sin. Sin is an act. Sin is a large category of evil deeds or thoughts or attitudes. Blasphemy is one kind of sin within that broad category. Blasphemy is the unique sin of speaking evil against God, of saying things about God that are not true about Him, of speaking of God in a derogatory manner. That is blasphemy. It is a defiant irreverence. It is to speak evil of.

Now Jesus begins by saying all that kind of sin and blasphemy is forgivable. “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men.” Now unless you run off into the middle of nowhere with that statement, there is a condition, however. That is not a universalist statement, that no matter what you do or what you think or what you believe, ultimately, all manner of sin and blasphemy will be forgiven. It’ll be forgiven when the conditions are met, and the condition for forgiveness of sin is very clearly given in the New Testament as repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And when you confess your sin and turn from your sin to Christ in faith, believing and receiving Him as Savior, then God will forgive, and He’ll forgive all your sin and all your blasphemy.

The classic illustration of that is the Apostle Paul, who himself in 1 Timothy 1 verse 13 says, “Who was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious. And I obtained mercy . . . and the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am” – what? – “chief.” I was the worst of sinners. I was a blasphemer. I spoke evil against God. And I was forgiven.

Yes, all manner of sin and blasphemy is forgivable. God is in the business of forgiving sin. You can go back into the Old Testament and you can read Psalm 32 where David says, “I brought my sin before You and You forgave me;” Psalm 85, where he talks about God’s wonderful forgiveness; Psalm 103, where he says God forgives and removes our sin as far as the east is from the west. The wonderful prophet Micah who says, “Who is a pardoning God like Thee, who is so magnanimous in His forgiveness, who buries our sins in the depths of the sea?” The prophet Jeremiah, in chapter 31, where speaks of the new covenant with its utter forgiveness. We find it in Isaiah 43:55 and elsewhere, where Isaiah says God will totally and completely forgive. We find, in the New Testament, the same thing. “If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Again and again, that is the message: Forgiveness, forgiveness, forgiveness.

And God graciously will forgive any sin, even the sin of blasphemy.

May I add as a footnote that even when a Christian blasphemes God, it is forgivable. You say, "Would a Christian do that?" Christians do that. Any time you think a thought, say a word that speaks against God, you have blasphemed, you spoken evil of His name. If you have said, "God, that wasn't fair," that's a blasphemy. I had a Christian friend who has been in the ministry call me this week and tell me that he had said to God, "You say You'll meet my needs, but You haven't met my needs. God, You aren't telling me the truth." That is blasphemy. But I believe God will forgive that in the life of a Christian, and I think there is reason to believe that.

In Colossians chapter 3, the Bible tells us – of course we know that the Lord will forgive all a Christian's sins, but even speaking evil against God is forgivable. Colossians 3, it says in verse 3, "We are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God." And that, of course, is talking about our salvation. We are dead as far as our old life is concerned; we are dead as far as being responsible to face the penalty of the law; we are dead in the past life, alive in the new life; our life is secure with Christ in God. Verse 4 says, "Christ, who is our life." And now we are living the Christ-life, we are redeemed. Then he says, now that we are redeemed, now that we are risen with Christ, now that we have a heavenly identification, we should – verse 5 – kill certain things in our lives. And we have to do this with the sins that we see: Fornication, uncleanness, and so forth and so forth. And you come down to verse 8, and he says, "Put off anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy." And what he is saying there is even a redeemed person may have to deal with the reality of blasphemy in his life. When he says to God, "That isn't right, God. That isn't fair, God. That wasn't wise. Why did You do that," in a sense you're speaking evil against God. That's forgivable.

I think even Hymenaeus and Alexander were turned over to Satan to learn not to blaspheme. They too easily – and apparently they were identified with the church. The same terms are used there that are used in 1 Corinthians 5 of others who were in the church turned over to Satan to learn not to blaspheme too. So I think they were believers who were to be taught that blasphemy was unacceptable behavior for a Christian, but it is forgivable. And so look at verse 31 again. "All kinds of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men. But" – and that little adversative makes all the difference – "the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven men." Now we are introduced to something that is not forgivable. And this is the only sin, by the way, beloved, in the Bible of which that is ever said that it is unforgivable.

Now blasphemy is serious. Do you know the penalty for blasphemy in the Old Testament? You can just jot down in your notes Leviticus 24:14-16 and look it up sometime. And you'll find that the penalty for blasphemy was death, stoning. If anybody speaks an evil word against God, you stoned them, take their life. Very serious. When you look at the vile and wretched, wicked society of anti-Christ that exists at the end time, and read Revelation 13, Revelation 16, Revelation 17, the last book in the New Testament, you will read that it is characteristic of the society of that day that they blaspheme the God of heaven. They speak evil against Him. It is a serious sin.

Now the sin is further defined in verse 32, and we'll see what it means. "Now whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him." Now stop there again. Now if you speak against the Son of Man, that's forgivable. Who is the Son of Man? Jesus Christ. What is He really saying by that statement? You can speak against Christ? Yes. But the emphasis comes from the words Son of Man. And Son of Man is a title that designates not His deity, that is Son of God, but His – what? – His humanity. We're seeing Him in humiliation here. We're seeing Him in servitude. We're

seeing Him as a vessel through which the Spirit of God is working.

And so He is saying you could speak a word against the Son of Man and that would be forgivable. Why? Because you may speak against Him, seeing nothing more than the humanness. In other words, your perception may not even allow you to be dealing with deity as a factor. And it is not His power on display, so you may be speaking against Him as Son of Man; you are condemning what you perceive in His humanness – even though you're wrong. You can understand that you can do that and you're not making really a comment on His deity at all, because it is the Spirit who is working, not Him, technically. And I would say another thought is important here, and that is the fact that this is His humiliation. There is a sense in which He is in a mode of humiliation which invites that kind of criticism. In other words, you might say, "If that is the Second Person of the Trinity, I'm not impressed." I mean, a carpenter from Nazareth and all that. You could speak a word against the human Jesus in His humiliation. That's forgivable. You may just not know the facts; you may just not know who He really is; you may not have seen the evidence; you may be just talking at the human level, without a perception of the divine. That's what He's saying.

"But" – watch this – "when you speak against the Holy Spirit, that will not be forgiven you, not in this time period or in the other time period to follow." Because when you begin to speak against the Spirit, then you are saying, "I recognize the supernatural, I see the supernatural, only I think it's hell, not heaven." For that, you won't be forgiven. If you're looking on the human plane and that's all you perceive and that's all you've understood, you could be brought along to believe and to understand. But if, when you have seen the supernatural and the ministry of the Spirit of God through Christ and you conclude that it is of the Devil, you can't be forgiven. Because now you are speaking against the Spirit of God, the power of God, the energy of God, as made manifest through Christ. And so, in a real sense, you're speaking against His deity, His divine nature, and calling it satanic.

The Jews once said, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" I mean, they weren't impressed with the human elements of Jesus. That was a far cry from saying, "Yes, we've seen His supernatural power; we've seen His miracles; we've heard His teachings; we've seen Him cast out devils; and our conclusion is that that power is out of hell." That was unforgivable – unforgivable.

Why? Stay with me. Forgiveness is based on repentance. Right? And faith in Christ. Now if they concluded that Christ was filled with the Devil, they certainly weren't going to listen to His message about repentance and put their faith in Him. The reason they could never be forgiven – now watch this – is because they would never believe. Why? Because when they had been given all the evidence there was, their conclusion was the very opposite of the truth. Therefore, they were hopeless.

I mean, if you only knew a little bit about Jesus Christ, you could be brought along to know a little more, or be brought along to know a little more and a little more, until it'd finally dawned on you what the truth was. But if you have known all the truth, and you have concluded that He is satanic, you're hopeless. If salvation comes by faith in Christ and the confidence that He is God and that He has confronted your sins from which you will repent and turn to Him – and they wouldn't believe any of that – then they could never be redeemed or forgiven. You see, for them, it became a permanent state. That's why at the end of verse 32 it says that you won't be forgiven in this age or in the one to come. There would be no forgiveness.

You see, they saw the work of the Holy Spirit and said, "It's the Devil." It wasn't just some little deal.

They had seen thousands of miracles and healings and dealings with demons. They had seen dramatic individual miracles and massive numbers of miracles. They had heard teachings and preachings. There was no other society that ever lived on the face of the earth that had the information they had about who He was. And they concluded He was of the Devil, so He says, “You can never be forgiven. There is no way.” Why? “Because you will never get to the forgiveness condition, which is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, because you have concluded the very opposite.” So it isn’t as if God is simply arbitrarily saying, “I don’t like the way you’re treating My Son; I will never forgive you, even if you come to Me.” No, what He is saying is, “You have had so much evidence and you have concluded the way you’ve concluded, therefore, it is obvious you will never come to Me. Therefore, you will never be forgiven.”

God couldn’t have done any more. Go back to Isaiah chapter 5 and I’ll show you a parallel passage. Isaiah the prophet was confronting the nation of Israel, about to go into the captivity in Babylon. And God, in Isaiah 5, through the prophet, describes why He will judge the people and why He will send them into their captivity and why they will be devoured and destroyed by those roaring lions that are going to come from the east that He talks about at the end of chapter 5. But as is a most interesting point here, He calls His people Israel His vineyard – actually Judah, but the nation of Israel now is constituted in Judah. He calls them His vineyard. And verse 3, he calls on the people. He says, “Now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, you judge” – you judge, I beg you – “between me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?” What could I have done more? And then back to verse 2, He uses a metaphor here, a picture of a vineyard as a description of Israel. “I dug it.” In other words he fenced it. That’s the idea of digging a moat. He put protection around Israel. Great protection. You know, they came into the land, they had water to the west of them and desert on every other side. They were really isolated people. He hedged them in. He protected them. He gathered out the stones, which has to do with removing the Canaanites. He planted the choicest vine, and the Jew is a noble people, believe me. And he built a tower, that is Jerusalem, and a winepress, the sacrificial system. And expected to get a product, but all He got was wild, sour berries.

And so He says in verse 3, “You judge.” And then in verse 4, “What could I have done more?” And so you know what He said? “That’s it.” And the armies of Babylon came and devastated and destroyed the land. There was nothing more to do and there was no reason to wait, because He had done everything He could have done. They had seen everything they could have seen, and if they turned their back on God at that point, then there’s nothing else to do. You have the same thing here in Matthew 12. You obviously have gone beyond the human. You’re not just looking at Me as the Son of Man. You’ve gone beyond that. You have perceived supernatural power. And your conclusion is that you have perceived it as being from hell. You’re hopeless. You’re hopeless.

Now people always ask, “Is this a sin unique to that era?” Of course. Of course. To commit this specific sin, you would have to be living on the earth when Christ was here, and there may be a possibility that this very same sin will be committed again in the Kingdom when Christ returns and again He is here on the earth and He does what He does miraculously. At that period of time, there will also be people who will rebel. Right? Revelation tells us that there will be a host of them from around the world who will fight Him, and so that very specific sin of attributing the works of Christ – or the works of the Spirit, really, to Satan could be committed again. However, the problem with that is that when He comes back the second time, they aren’t going to specifically be the works of the Spirit because He will not be any longer in a humiliation mode. He will be in an exaltation mode, and they will be His own works – certainly in harmony with the Spirit. And at that time, the sin may be a little

different, in that they will be blaspheming Him for His own works, and that too would be unforgivable if they have seen enough so that they have all the light that could possibly be given.

Now you look at these Pharisees, what else could God have done? Thousands of miracles. Over and over and over they had seen it; they had heard it; they had known of it. By their own evidence, they had proven to themselves in their own minds that He had the power. They concluded the very opposite; they are damned. That's it.

You know it was less than 40 years after this that God destroyed the entire Jewish society, 70 A.D. He destroyed the temple, wiped out the city of Jerusalem, massacred one million one hundred thousand Jews, and in the years that followed, conquerors came through and slaughtered the Jews of 985 towns and villages. It was over. It was over, because all the evidence was in and only the remnant believed, and the rest said, "He's of the Devil."

That's unique to that period, but that kind of sin is not necessarily unique, because it came in the very next period. Turn in your Bible to Hebrews chapter 6 – Hebrews chapter 6. And here we see the next period of time, if you will, the period that immediately follows the life of Christ, and we see the same kind of sin occur again. Chapter 5 verse 11, we'll start – Hebrews 5:11. And he's talking here about some pretty heavy theologies, comparing the priesthood of Christ with the priesthood of Melchizedek, who was an Old Testament king and priest in the book of Genesis. And he's making a comparison between Christ and Melchizedek rather than Christ and the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood. He says He's more like Melchizedek as a priest, and he goes into this very marvelous comparison.

And then in verse 11, he sort of stops and gives another one of the warning passages. The book was basically written to Christian Jews. But periodically there are warnings to non-Christian Jews, unsaved Jews, who have had all of the intellectual information; they've had all the intellectual stimulation; they've had the proof and the evidence. They've seen it all; they've heard it all; and they believe it in their minds, but they will not come to Christ. They won't take that extra step because they're afraid of being ostracized from their society. They're afraid of being un-synagogued; they're afraid of being put out socially and so forth, and so they are holding back.

And so he says to them, "I want to say more," in verse 11, "but it's hard for me to say it because you're so stupid." Dull of hearing means slow, sluggish, stupid. I can't say any more because you're too thick. For the time that you've been hanging around this stuff, you should be able to teach it. But not only can you not teach it, you need somebody else to give you the first principles. You know what that means? ABC's of the oracles of God – Old Testament laws. Paul calls them that. Instead of being able to teach and to understand these rich truths about the Messiah, you need to be taught the Old Testament basics again, you're so thick. You just need milk all the time; you can't take the good stuff, solid stuff.

And he says in verse 13, "You're totally unskillful." That means unexperienced in righteousness. And that's a good indication they weren't Christians. They were unexperienced in righteousness, in teaching about righteousness. They were babes. And by the way, babe does not mean a Christian – a new Christian. Babe means an ignorant, spiritually stupid individual, whether you're talking about a Christian or not. The term is used in 1 Corinthians 3 for Christians. It is used in Galatians 4 for non-Christians. So that isn't the issue. And here, they're non-Christians. Jews who should have been able to teach the truth of Messiah, but because they wouldn't listen to it and they wouldn't come all the



way to faith, they had to be re-taught the ABC's of the Old Testament, because they were so ignorant and unskillful in the truth about righteousness. They didn't have the sense to be able to discern, verse 14 says.

So then we come to 1 of 6 and watch what happens. "Therefore" – let me tell you again. Warning – "leave the principles of the teaching of Christ." Now some people have really misunderstood what that says. "Let us abandon the basics of the teachings about Messiah." Now where are the basics of the teachings about Messiah? Where are they? Old Testament. What are they? Types, shadows, prophecies, sacrifices. Right? All of those pictures in the Old Testament that were the ABC's about the Messiah. We've got to go on. We have to leave those things. We've got to, verse 1, "Go on unto perfection." What is perfection? Oh, you know, that's spiritual maturity. No, that's what Paul uses it for, but that is not what the writer of Hebrews uses it for. Perfection in Hebrews is salvation. It can't be anything else. Chapter 7 verse 11, and there he says, "If therefore, perfection were by the Levitical priesthood" – and so forth and so on. He is saying that the Levitical priesthood couldn't save. Verse 19, "For the law made nothing perfect." The law can't save you. "For by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." And then when you go to chapter 10, it becomes even abundantly clear. Verse 14, "Christ, by one offering, has perfected forever" – and that's not talking about spiritual maturity of the believer; that's talking about eternal salvation – "has perfected forever them that are sanctified."

So he's saying, look – now watch this, verse 1, "We've got to leave the Old Testament pictures and come on to salvation." Which means we got to get into the new covenant; we got to get into the New Testament; we've got to get into Christ. We can't be doing all over again the old stuff. And he mentions several things, "Laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works." That isn't wrong? No, that's just limited. They believed in repentance. They believed in turning from their sins, turning from dead works, but there is more to it than that. They have to repent and come to Christ. They have to come to Christ for perfection. And then he says, "And faith toward God." Nothing wrong with faith toward God, only no man comes unto God but by – what? – by me, Jesus said.

And what about the doctrines or the teachings of washings? By the way, the word is translated baptism in the AV there. That's the only place in the whole New Testament they translated that word baptisms that it isn't baptism. These aren't Christians, these are Jews, and these are washings. And so he says, "We have to leave the teaching of external cleansing and come to the cleansing of the blood of Christ and laying on of hands." Which was when the Jew brought his sacrifice, he put it on the altar and put his hands on it to identify it with his sins. We've got to get to the point where we are no longer worried about laying hands on dead animals, but where we are laying hold of Christ, the Lamb of God. And the resurrection of the dead, sure it's in the Old Testament, but we don't know what it really means until Christ, who is our life, comes out of the grave. Then finally, the eternal judgment, which comes into clear focus in the New Testament as to punishment and reward.

So the whole message here is, "Look, you people are stuck in your sluggishness and your ignorance and your stupidity, going over the basics. You've got to come on to salvation in Christ" Now this warning goes all through the book of Hebrews. If you good back to chapter 2 for just a moment and you look at verse 3, there's another one of these. "How shall we escape," he says, "if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed to us by them that heard Him." The apostles. And knew it was the truth. Why? There were "signs and wonders and diverse miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit."

Now you see, the Hebrews had received very much the same kind of evidence that the Pharisees had received. They had heard the message, not preached by Christ, but by His apostles, who had His commission. They had seen miracles, all of that, the power of the Spirit manifest through the apostles. And by the way, they, like Christ, were totally dependent on the power of the Spirit. And they had neglected it. They had neglected it. In chapter 3, he says – all the way from 7 to 19 of chapter 3, he says, “You’re getting the message given to you, but you’re hardening your heart.” So chapter 2 was neglect and chapter 3 was the hardening of the heart. And chapter 4 goes on to talk about that hardening of the heart, and chapter 5 talks about their stupidity and sluggishness. And chapter 6 talks about they are staying in the ABC’s of the old instead of moving to the new.

Now watch. He says you’ve got to move on, and only God can help you to do it, verse 3. Why? Here comes the warning in verse 4. You’ve got to move on to faith in Christ for one basic reason. It’s this. “It is impossible.” By the way, you know what that word means? Impossible. Doesn’t mean really difficult, it means utterly impossible. It’s the same word used over in verse 18 of the same chapter, where it says it is impossible for God to lie. So it is just as impossible for this to happen as it is impossible for God to lie. What is it? “It’s impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted the heavenly gift, made partakers of the Holy Spirit” – or Holy Spirit – “tasted the good Word of God, the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance.” In other words, he says this, “If you fall away now, you will never, ever be renewed again to repentance. You’ll be hopeless,” just like the Pharisees of Matthew 12.

You say, now wait a minute. Weren’t these people Christians? Let’s find out – verse 4. They were enlightened. What does that mean? What does it mean to be enlightened. That has to do with your mind. It means to give light of knowledge, to understand something intellectually. That is its use. It is used in 2 Peter 2 of those who were given the knowledge of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. They had the knowledge, but the world’s powers pressed in on them, and like dogs they returned to their vomit. They rejected that head knowledge. He’s talking about head knowledge. Jesus, in Matthew 4, when He preached, said, “The light has shone in the darkness,” and the people were exposed to the light. Weren’t they? In fact Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.” He told them that. He said to them, “Come to Me while it is day” – or while it is light. The light was there; they had been enlightened.

And secondly, it says, “They tasted the heavenly gift.” What is the heavenly gift? I believe that’s Christ, the unspeakable gift, the salvation message, the gospel bound up in Christ. You says, well how did they taste Christ? They followed Him around; they saw His power; they heard His message, saw His miracles. By the way, they didn’t eat His flesh and drink His blood, as John 6 says they would have had to have done. They just dabbled in it, just tasted it. Jesus said, “If you want to enter into life, drink the water.” He didn’t say, “Taste the water.” You had to drink it; there was a total commitment. They tasted it; they knew its character; they knew its quality. They were like the spies at Kadesh-Barnea who spied out the land, saw all the good things, turned around and went back, said “We can’t take it.”

You see, this is one of the pre-salvation ministries. In fact, I would suggest to you that this passage is probably the best in the whole Bible to describe the Spirit’s work in preparing someone to be saved. First, there comes an enlightenment and understanding of the message, then a taste of what salvation would be like, a taste of the wonders of Christ. And then further, they became partakers of the Holy Spirit. How did they do that? Well if you were on a hillside, for example, in Galilee when Jesus made fish and bread and you ate some, you’d be a partaker, wouldn’t you, of the power of the

Spirit. Or if you were a blind man and you were given sight, whether you were saved or not, you would have partaken in the power of the Holy Spirit. They had seen miracles, many of them. By the way, the word partaker is metochos, which means association. That's never used of a Christian. We're not in association with the Holy Spirit; we're indwelt by the Spirit; we're possessors of the Spirit; we're filled with the Spirit. They just were associated. They were around. They saw the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Hebrews 2:4 says.

And then it says further, "They tasted the good Word of God." Of course they did. Rhēma the word for word here, and it means a speech. They had heard a lot of speeches about God, a lot of speeches about Christ. They had listened to the preachers. Many of them heard the Word of God, and they may have heard it with interest and eagerness. It says in Mark 6:20, that Herod heard John gladly, but he never believed. And then it says they tasted "the powers of the age to come." What are the powers of the age to come? Well, what is the age to come? The age to come is the Kingdom. What is its power? The full power of Christ. And they saw glimpses of that, didn't they?

Here, this generation right after Christ, ministered to by the apostles, was enlightened by their teaching, was able to taste the heavenly gift because they preached salvation; they were made partakers of the Holy Spirit as they saw the miracles; they tasted the good Word of God as it was delivered to them; and the powers of the age to come were demonstrated to them by the energy of the Spirit through those preachers. What's he saying? He's saying exactly what God said in Isaiah, "What more could I have done?" I mean, what do you need to believe? If you've had all of that and you fall away, it is impossible to renew you to repentance. Why? Because if you don't believe when you have all the revelation there is, you'll never believe. You see that? And you'll take your place with those who crucify Christ. Literally, the text says if you do all of this and have fallen away, you could never be renewed to repentance. You could never come back. What he's saying is this, "Boy, if you're there at the point of highest revelation, you better believe at that point, because if you don't, that's it. You fall away from the fullness of revelation, and that's it. You will become an apostate - unredeemable, unforgivable, forever and ever."

Then he gives an illustration, just to make it sink in, in verse 7. He says the rain comes down, is prepared to bring forth something good, and it does. But in some cases, verse 8, it brings thorns and briars and is rejected and they are cursed and they are burned. And the rain speaks of all of those things in verses 4 and 5. That is God's rain of blessing, saying, "Here is the message. Believe it. See it. And if you come forth with briars and thorns, you'll be burned. Then verse 9, "But, beloved" – and now he turns a corner and talks to Christians – "we are persuaded better things of you and the things that accompany salvation." See, those things didn't accompany salvation, did they? That was the warning section to the unbelievers.

Now listen very carefully as I draw it all together. People say, "What was the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit?" It was attributing to Satan the works of the Spirit. When they had all the revelation there was, in the presence of the living Christ on earth, they concluded it was satanic. They could never be forgiven. People say, well can it be committed in another time? Here in the very next generation, you have a very similar sin, where people had all the revelation that God could possibly give them, and they came to the edge and said, "No, we're not interested," and they fell away. Now, the ones who fell away could never again be renewed to repentance. Why? Because they would never believe with less revelation; they wouldn't believe when they had it all. So they fell away. But how much more severe, not just to fall away – in Matthew 12 – but to fall away and then overtly blaspheme. You see, the ones in Hebrews just didn't believe. They weren't willing to pay the price. But the ones in

Matthew not only weren't willing to do that, they blasphemed. So theirs is a greater guilt. But hell is reserved for both.

You say, what about this age? In this age, the same principle is valid. If you have been exposed to all of the truth concerning the gospel that God can give, in other words, you have enough to make a decision, and your final conclusion is that it is not the truth, you are unredeemable. And the warning is: Don't get to that point. That's why Jesus said, "You better believe while it is day, for the night comes when the lights are going to go out."

During the second World War, an aircraft carrier was in the North Atlantic. It was at a very high point in the war and the carrier was engaged in a battle. There was a lull in the battle and there were many ships in the area. The American forces were in a precarious position. There was a moment of respite. Six pilots took off in their planes and left the carrier to see if they could search out enemy submarines that could be attacked. While they were all up in the air, the enemy did attack by air, and the order came out that there had to be a total blackout. The carrier had to shut off every light. This left the six pilots flying around in the air without any ability to locate their ship in the dark of a black night.

They radioed in, and the first pilot said, "Give us some light and we'll land. We'll make it, even if we have to fly through the artillery." The radio operator said, "I can't. I'm not permitted to give any light, because it is a total blackout." The second pilot said, "Just give us one light." He said, "I can't." Each successive pilot tried to get that operator to break his orders, which he didn't, and the record says, "The operator could do no more. He reached over, turned the switch, and broke radio contact. Six red-blooded aviators in the prime of manhood went down in the cold North Atlantic and out into eternity." I'm not the judge of when it happens, but there is a time when God turns out the lights and you can never find your way back. And I think that's the spirit of Jesus when He says, "Believe while you can," and Paul when he says, "Now is the accepted time." Let's pray.

Thank You, Lord, again for such a clear word out of Your Scripture. Thank You for Your grace; it calls and calls and calls. And where there is even the slightest little flicker of hope, thank You that You fan the flame, that You never give up where there is any hope. Lord, we pray that no one would fall away, no one would turn their back and walk away from the edge of Your kingdom and have the lights go out forever. Father, bring to the prayer room those that You would have to come. Minister to every heart today. Bring us back tonight with great excitement and anticipation of what You have for us. Thank You for Your precious Word, Your beloved Son, in whose name we pray. Amen.

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