

NOON BIBLE STUDY: MATTHEW 12 (PART 3)

Matthew 12:(22-29) 30

Jesus is confronting the Pharisees with the reality that there is no neutrality when it comes to the Messiah. Jesus has been very invitational throughout our study of Matthew, but he is also raising an important truth for us to consider. We are watching and listening along with the crowds, but we eventually need to arrive at a place of decision. Saying “following Jesus isn’t really my thing” is actually making a decision in opposition to him. Similarly, if you are interested in the ministry of Jesus but don’t join in with his efforts, you’re not just on the sidelines, you’re still on the other team. This would have been particularly convicting for the Pharisees since they were under the assumption that *they* were doing God’s work and could in the least ignore Jesus.

Matthew 12:31-32 - Blasphemy Against The Spirit

“**Blasphemy**” - Greek Word - βλασφημία *blasphemia* [988] means to slander. In the NASB it is also translated “abusive language”, “slander”, and “railing”. The root “*pheme*” [5354] means news or report. (1st usage of Hebrew blasphemy in Leviticus 24:11-16. And another good cross-reference is Balaam’s attempt to “curse” the Israelites in Numbers 22-24)

Matthew 15:18-19 - "But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. 19 "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, **slanders**.

Ephesians 4:31 - Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and **slander** be put away from you, along with all malice.

1 Timothy 6:4-5 - (*a false teacher*) is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, **abusive language**, evil suspicions, 5 and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.

v. 31 - “therefore...” - This is a good example of how knowing the context of a passage of scripture is important to be able to understand another part of Scripture. The conversation Jesus has with the Pharisees immediately preceding verses 31-32 related to the Pharisees' accusation that Jesus' power was from the devil and not from God. They reject the power of God and attribute it to demonic forces.

It seems that this “blasphemy against the Spirit” relates to someone who is rejecting the work and power of God. Jesus says that as long as someone rejects God, there will not be forgiveness. The Pharisees are in a dangerously precarious situation by the words they are speaking, not even against Jesus, but more so about the source and origination of Jesus' power and authority.

Jesus had just said the following: "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. **(12:28)**

The Pharisees said the following: “But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons." **(12:24)**

They may not agree with Jesus' teaching or think he's the Messiah, but they aren't just pointing that out - they are saying that the Spirit's power on display through Jesus is actually the devil's power. As long as someone rejects God's spirit at work around them or in their own life, they should not assume that they will be forgiven, simply because "God is good".

So, blasphemy against the holy spirit is to reject God and to attribute what is of God to the devil.

"The sin is attributing to Satan what is accomplished by the power of God, and doing this through the flagrant, willful, and persistent rejection of God and his commands." (ESV Study Bible, Mt. 12:31-32)

Q - Is this something you can do accidentally? If you blaspheme one time, is there no hope for you?

The Pharisees had arrived at a place of severe hardness of heart - this is not a place one arrives at in one moment. Their rejection of God's spirit has been built up over time and is being doubled down on as they interact with Jesus and refuse to humbly accept (or at the bare minimum consider) that God is working in and through Christ.

In the very next section, Jesus continues to address the state of a person's heart - how to identify the condition of your heart as well as how to change the condition of your heart.

Q - Have I committed the "unforgivable sin?"

I think it is reasonable to suggest that if you are wondering and worrying about this, that's probably a good sign that your heart is in a place much different than the Pharisees were. I do not think that this sin (like all sin) is something that is determined by a single moment in time but a combination of an ongoing practice as well as a final determination at the end of one's life.

On the day of judgment, there are going to be many sins that we never confessed that will be covered by the expansive mercy and grace of God for those who have confessed Jesus as their Lord and have had his sacrifice applied to our sin debt. However, rejecting the power of God and/or attributing to the devil the things that are of God will not be one of those.

In summary, aided by the larger passage itself, it seems like "blaspheming the holy spirit" is Jesus' way of saying that the sin of rejecting God and His power, the very source of salvation and forgiveness, you will not be forgiven of that sin.

Matthew 12:33-37 - Heart & Words & Judgement

"Brood of vipers" - the offspring or children of venomous snakes

Notice the continuation of the teaching point here is addressing the words a person speaks is an indication of their heart condition. The words and deeds of Jesus (fruit) are good while the Pharisees are evil.

Even "careless" words are windows into the heart of a person (**v. 36**). It's tempting to brush off something by saying "*I didn't mean it...*" but a more honest admission would be "*I didn't mean for what was really in my heart to come out in my words!*"

God will judge a person based on his standards with the person's own heart as evidence. For humans, it is harder to see what is in our hearts and so Jesus teaches that the way we can see the heart is by hearing the words we speak. This is much bigger than the occasional four-letter-word. We need to recognize that the condition of our heart is changed through a relationship with God - the one who knows, sees, and transforms the heart of a person.