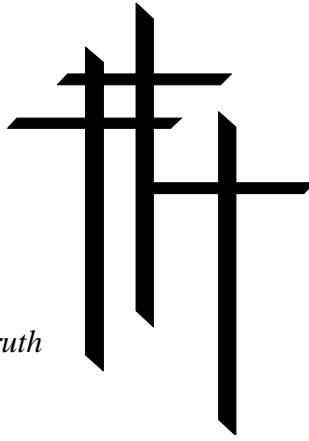


Timely Messenger

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



Volume 64 No. 2

February 2004

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

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)

The “sin and blasphemy against the (Holy) Spirit” that Jesus speaks of here is what is

commonly referred to as the “unpardonable sin.” Many people worry about committing such a sin, even today during this present age of grace. Can a person commit such a sin today? In order to answer this question, we need to determine just what this sin against the Holy Spirit is, and we need to look carefully at the context in which Jesus made this statement to see whether or not this passage of Scripture is even applicable to us today.

The first word in verse 31 is “therefore,” a word

that forces us to look back at the previous verses, for they form the basis for Jesus’ statement in verses 31-32. In verse 22, we find Jesus healing a man who was demon-possessed, blind and mute. As the multitudes watched this miracle, they were amazed and asked, “Could this be the Son of David?” Why would they ask this question? When we look back at Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming of Israel’s Messiah, the One anointed by God to be their King, we find that when He comes to save Israel, He will perform wonderful miracles of healing.

“Say to those who are fearful-hearted, ‘Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and save you.’ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing ...” (Isa.

35:4-6)

When the multitudes saw Jesus heal the blind and the mute, they wondered if He could be the Son of David, their Messiah and King.

The Pharisees, who were the strictest sect of the Jew's religion, disputed this question posed by the multitudes and offered their own explanation for Jesus' miracles.

"This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons." (Matt. 12:24)

Jesus, knowing their thoughts, responded to this false statement. He reasoned with them saying, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation." Therefore, it would make no sense for Satan to cast out his own demons, for "How then will his kingdom stand?" (Matt. 12:25-26).

Jesus also pointed out,

"If I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them

out?" (Matt. 12:27).

Not only was Jesus able to cast out demons, He had also given authority to His twelve apostles to do so as well, therefore, He told the Pharisees, "They shall be your judges" (Matt. 12:27 cf. Luke 22:28-30).

Then, Jesus declared,

"But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house." (Matt. 12:28-29)

The kingdoms of the world, even the world itself, are presently under the control and authority of Satan. At one point during Satan's temptations of Jesus, Satan took Him up on a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, saying, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered

to me, and I give it to whomever I wish" (Luke 4:6). While Jesus rebuked Satan for demanding worship that is due to God and God alone, He did not dispute Satan's claim regarding his authority over the kingdoms of the world. Later, we find Jesus referring to Satan as "the prince of this world" on at least three different occasions (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11).

One day, the Lord Jesus Christ will completely fulfill what is found in Matthew 12:29. He will enter the strong man's house, returning to the earth and entering this world which is currently ruled by Satan; He will bind the strong man, casting Satan into the bottomless pit and imprisoning him there for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-3); and He will plunder the strong man's goods, for all "the kingdoms of this world" will become "the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" (Rev. 11:15).

In casting out demons by the Spirit of God, Jesus clearly demonstrated His

power and His authority to take the kingdoms of this world from Satan's control and establish His own rule over all the earth. The presence of their King, living and working in their midst, should have been proof to Israel that the kingdom of God had come upon them.

Jesus then dealt with the position of the Pharisees, who, even at that time, were already plotting against Jesus to destroy Him (Matt. 12:14).

“He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.” (Matt. 12:30).

The Pharisees had already rejected Jesus as their King and refused to confess that He was the Christ, the Son of God. Instead of working with Him to lead the children of Israel into the kingdom of heaven, their opposition to the Lord Jesus Christ caused others in Israel to be scattered abroad. Later, Jesus pronounced woe upon this very same group of self-righteous religious leaders.

“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.” (Matt. 23:13)

As we can see from the context, there is certainly nothing that would lead us to try and apply Matthew 12:31-32 in this present dispensation of grace. This passage centers on the question of Jesus' authority as Israel's King, a fact that was clearly demonstrated through His power to cast out demons by the Holy Spirit. The people who are being dealt with are Jews, in particular the Pharisees, the religious leaders of Israel. The key issue is their response to Jesus' ability to cast out demons. Instead of acknowledging this to be the power of the Holy Spirit, they attributed this miracle, instead, to Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons; that is to Satan himself.

*To be continued
next month.*

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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, 3
 - A. The Petition
 - B. The Power
 - C. The Provision
 - D. The Promises

“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” (2 Peter 1:4)

1. The Essence

“Whereby” points to the One through whom these great and precious promises come. It parallels Paul’s statement in 2 Corinthians 1:20,

“For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.”

2. The Error

While these verses present a great and precious truth, they have been misinterpreted to put forth a doctrine that is not only untrue, but can be quite dangerous. Who among us has not heard (and possibly taught little children) the chorus that says: “Every promise in the Book is mine, every chapter, every verse, every line.” Not every promise in the Book is ours. That leaves no room for

rightly dividing the Word of Truth. When we face reality, we must admit that many of the promises that God made to His earthly people Israel are not made to us. To claim them is to claim that which does not belong to us. For example, Psalm 91:10 says, "There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling," has been claimed by many people as a promise to them, resulting in their refusal to have their children inoculated against diseases. That is a precious promise, but it was made to Israel during the dispensation of the Law, not to the Body of Christ in the dispensation of Grace. To teach that all the promises in God's Word are directly to us can result in doubt of the veracity of God's Word. Members of the Body of Christ indeed have "great and precious promises." We are promised that we are saved by grace, kept by grace and taught by grace. We are promised that one day our Lord will "change our vile body that it might be fashioned like unto His glorious body." We are assured of a position, a hope and a calling that are heavenly. We are indeed "partakers of the divine nature."

3. The Escape

Our promises concerning our heavenly calling surely is the means whereby we can escape the corruption or destruction that is in this world. We are admonished in Colossians 3:1-4:

"If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

(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.

WITH ETERNITY'S VALUES IN VIEW

by Charles W. Wages

*Continued from the
December 2003 issue.*

Our theme throughout these lessons has been that “eternal life” is not some “far distant hoped for possibility,” but rather a present, permanent, position that every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has by the marvelous, matchless grace of God. This truth is a scriptural “fact” that should determine our every act.

Often the question is asked, “Do you think a person could be saved and not know it?” Or conversely, could one be lost and not know it? These seem to be “foolish” thoughts or questions, but, in fact, they have tremendously important implications. A person could have been baptized in infancy or joined a church, thinking it was necessary for salvation or eternal life. Some even think they have “sinned away salvation” or committed the “unpardonable

sin.” There are numerous misconceptions why a person would not know whether they were saved or not.

There is a familiar passage of Scripture in 1 John 5:9-13,

“If we receive the witness of man, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He has testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God has the witness in himself : he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in the Son. He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have

eternal life and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

Verse 13 is the verse closely connected to our theme, “With Eternity’s Values in View.” This verse is often referred to as an assurance of our salvation. It surely does give us that assurance, however, it specifically says, “that ye may know that you have eternal life.” Surely, “eternal life” and salvation are closely connected, however the stress is on “eternal life,” and further that we may “know.”

Knowledge is a wonderful thing, but how much do we “know” about the eternal life God has given to those who have believed? Knowledge is often defined as “the fact or condition of knowing something with familiarity gained through experience or association.” However, simply stated, the real understanding of life and eternal life only comes through His Word. It is a wonderful experience to feel like a believer or even to rejoice in the eternal life God has so freely given, but we can

only “know for sure” because He has declared it! The apostle John was led to write, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” (1 John 5:13)

The emphasis in this verse seems to be on the expression, “that ye may know that ye have eternal life.” How can we “know” we have eternal life? The answer is, “this is the record” (vs. 11) and “These things have I written unto you” (vs. 13). It is recorded in God’s Word! Therefore, we can know!

Having and knowing we have eternal life is a wonderful experience and feeling, but we “know” it because God says so. Knowing for sure we have eternal life will amplify the values of this life naturally and spiritually. The value we place on human life will increase, and our desire to see them redeemed will be greater.

“And we know that the Son of God is come, and

hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.” (1 John 5:20)

The Apostle Paul knew,

when he wrote under inspiration,

“For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” (2 Tim. 1:12)

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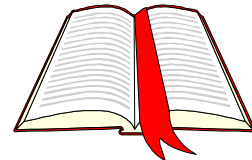
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