

(John - Part 35): The Unpardonable Sin - What It Is, What It Is Not

by A.W. Tozer

The unpardonable sin is attributing the work of the Holy Ghost to the devil and calling the Holy Ghost a devil, and it is a sin that cannot be forgiven.

Duration: 56:40

Scripture: Isaiah 54:4-5, Isaiah 54:8-9, Mark 3:28-30

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of holding two things in mind: how bad we were as sinners and how powerful the blood of Jesus is to save us. He contrasts those who think they are good with those who humbly admit their own unworthiness. The preacher shares a personal experience of God giving him a chapter of scripture and encourages the audience to trust in God's promises. He also warns about the danger of a sin that cannot be forgiven, referencing a passage in Mark where the scribes accuse Jesus of casting out demons by the power of the devil.

Transcript

In the eighth chapter of John, coming to verse 48 and on, and answered the Jews and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil? Jesus answered, I have not a devil, but I honor my father and you do dishonor me. Thy seek not mine own glory, there is one that seeketh and judges. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.

Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead and the prophets, and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. But thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead, and the prophets are dead, whom makest thou thyself? See, in verse 48, they said, Say we not well, isn't it true what we said? And that takes us back to the seventh chapter, verse 20.

The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil. Who goes about to kill thee? We wince when we read that. Thou hast a devil, talking to the Son of God.

And in 1020, that is repeated. Many of them said, He has a devil and is mad. Why hear ye him? Don't listen to him, he has a devil and is crazy.

Now, four times in John, this is said, that the Lord had a devil. It is said elsewhere also, but it is recorded these four places in John. And it requires that we deal with this tasteful subject tonight.

And I should like to handle it by showing that this is the sin that can never be forgiven, commonly called the unpardonable sin. And I want to treat it like this, that there is a sin that can never be forgiven, what it is not, what it is, why it cannot be forgiven, and how we can know that we have not committed it. And that's a little five-point sermon which I hope to get through without too much difficulty.

There's just about as much lift in this as there is in, I can't think of any simile. It has no wings in it, no lift of any sort. You're in ugly, dark theology here.

And you're just going to have to grit your teeth and take it. It's a bitter medicine, but it's here. Now, there is a sin that can never be forgiven.

That is found several places in the Bible. For instance, in Mark 22 and following, these words. And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath bills above, and by the prince of the devils cast he out devils.

And he called them unto him and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. Satan rise up against himself and be divided, he cannot stand.

But hath a man. No man can enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man. Then he will spoil his house.

Then verse 28, Verily I say unto you, all sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men. And all blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme. But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.

And verse 30, Because they said, he hath an unclean spirit. That is, it's like this. This he said, because they said, he hath an unclean spirit.

I have copied here on a card to read to you two texts that is the same text out of two different translations. Listen to this. Believe me, there is pardon for all the other sins of mankind.

And the blasphemies they utter. But if a man blaspheme against the Holy Spirit, there is no pardon for him in all eternity. He is guilty of a sin which is eternal.

This was because they were saying, he has an unclean spirit. That's Knox translation, Berkeley. I assure you that all the sins the sons of men commit and all the blasphemies they utter are pardonable.

But whoever blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit shall have no forgiveness forever. He is guilty of eternal sin. Because they said, he has an unclean spirit.

Now, I don't think we need to go any further in showing that there is a sin that can never be pardoned. Because our Lord states it here in omniquivocal language. It is not an obscure text hidden away.

It is not buried in obscurity. There are no variations of readings that I can discover any place in the various translations. Sometimes a tough passage will more than be too much for the finest minds.

Because they have differences of readings in the various old manuscripts. But there is nothing like that here. This is it.

There is no marginal explanations, no place that I can discover at any rate. And I've got, as I said this morning, I wouldn't know how many translations. And it's just here, Jesus said it plainly, that there is an eternal sin.

Which as basic English has it, his sin will be with him forever. He never can get released from. Now that's what Jesus our Lord said.

Now I suppose that there has scarcely been a doctrine in the New Testament that has been worse misunderstood than the doctrine of the unpardonable sin. And I very much wish that you give me a hearing tonight. And that you would not be just passing it over and waiting it out so you can get up.

But you'd listen to me. It may help you and it may be God's voice to you. A great many people think they have committed the unpardonable sin.

And some have gone so far that it has become a mental weight on them. A fixed idea. They believe it and they believe it so firmly.

And they're so very humble about it and so very self-effacing and modest. They feel as if, well, I ought to perish. I ought to be damned.

I've done it, I ought to be damned. And they think they've committed the unpardonable sin. And then there's a lot of loose preaching about the unpardonable sin.

It's a trick subject. It's something you can usually get a lot of people to come to hear. A man can be sure at least somebody will be out if he preaches on the unpardonable sin.

I had this to deal with tonight. God knows I didn't choose it. But first, next rather, I want to talk about what the unpardonable sin is not.

That there is such a sin has been declared in Mark and in Matthew fully and developed and explained by our Lord. Now, what it is not, and I'm going only to take these sins which people often think are the unpardonable sins. The first one is irreverence toward God.

There are those who believe that if you curse God, that that's the unpardonable sin. That irreverence and sacrilegious conduct toward God constitutes the unpardonable sin. Well, now, that isn't so.

And there are many reasons why it is not so. But let's put it like this. Do you not know that there are millions of people who have been irreverent? Millions of people, or have been millions of people over the past century, who have been irreverent, who have cursed and sworn and used the name of God and Christ, and I've even heard them curse in the name of the Virgin Mary, as if it were not bad enough.

They had to curse the very mother of Jesus. I've heard that. And some of you have heard it in curse words.

Not that certainly that she's any part of the Godhead. But that the blasphemy against Jesus actually went toward the mother of Jesus. I've heard that.

And yet there are, no doubt, in heaven tonight, millions of redeemed people who later on, like the prodigal in the far country, after irreverence and cursing and using the name of Christ in vain and trampling it under their feet, later they came to themselves and humbly and meekly came back to the Father's house. And were received and they were washed from their pollution and cleansed from their iniquity. And tonight they're with God, either walking on earth as good Christians or living there, waiting for the consummation.

Now, if irreverence and blasphemous talk, if that was the unpardonable sin, how could it be then that thousands, if not millions, certainly millions over the centuries and thousands living today that had been, as we say, blasphemers, are now Christians? And so taking the name of the Lord in vain is not the unpardonable sin. There are two thoughts there. The irreverence toward God and taking the name of the Lord in vain, and neither one of those sins is the unpardonable sin.

I suppose that if I were to ask for testimony tonight, which I don't intend to do, and I were to say, I'd like to ask some of you men that used to use the name of God in profanity and profane language, and tonight you're a happy Christian, would you stand? I'm sure some of you men would get up and stand. I can't recall that I ever used the name of God. I certainly used language that wouldn't be printed in the front page of the newspaper when I was a young fellow.

But I doubt whether I ever did that or not. But I have known many people that did, and later turned to the Lord Jesus and were completely forgiven and received as though they had never done it, so that blasphemy, that is, profanity, is not the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. And then there are those that think that breaking vows and promises made to God, as they put it, lying to God, would say, oh, but I lied to God.

I promised God I would do something and I didn't do it. I broke my vow. I lied to God.

So they try to pin the unpardonable sin on their poor, undiscouraged souls because they've broken vows and promises and lied to God. Well, if I were to ask everybody here that's a Christian now, a happy, conscious Christian, that has never broken a vow, but has kept all your promises to God, never told God a lie in all your life, I would ask you to stand. There wouldn't be one of you that would have the temerity to stand on your feet because broken vows and promises and lying to God and breaking our trust and faith certainly have been common things, and yet they are pardonable and cleansable, and the blood that our sister sang about can sweep over the soul and destroy all those sins.

And so any sin that a man commits, such as irreverence toward God, taking the name of God in vain, breaking vows and lying to God, and later turns to God and is forgiven and pardoned and lives a happy Christian life and has a joyous testimony to the power of the blood, that can't be the unpardonable sin. Then the fourth sin that people say, they're always for themselves, they never blame it on others, they're always blaming on themselves, resisting or quenching or grieving the Spirit. Bible talks about resisting the Spirit, talks about quenching the Spirit, and talks about grieving the Spirit.

And there are those who say, well, but I resisted the Holy Ghost, I quenched the Holy Ghost, I grieved Him, and I know I've committed the unpardonable sin. Now, to commit any sin is to quench the Spirit. To commit any sin is to resist the Spirit.

To commit any sin is to grieve the Spirit. So that you cannot commit any sin. A man can't get angry, a Christian can't get angry without grieving the Spirit.

He can't be jealous without grieving the Spirit. He can't be stingy without grieving the Spirit. He can't be self-righteous without grieving the Spirit.

So any sin grieves the Holy Ghost. Any sin quenches the Holy Ghost. And you've got to resist the pulsations of the Holy Ghost to commit any sin.

To say that grieving, quenching, or resisting the Holy Ghost is the unpardonable sin is to wipe the slate clean, or rather, write it full and say that every sin is the unpardonable sin. And how many are there here now, happy in Christ this very night, that have resisted the Holy Spirit back there? Suppose I hear the gospel and I resist for a year. Have I resisted the Holy Spirit? I have resisted the Holy Spirit.

And at the end of that year, under the pressure of God and my friends and prayers, I break and yield and give myself to Him and enter into this happy spiritual life. And surely resisting the Holy Spirit can't be the unpardonable sin, because I resisted Him and I was pardoned. Surely quenching the Spirit can't be, for a man who quenched the Spirit have been pardoned, as well as grieving the Spirit.

All right, suicide, that's fifth. Some say that suicide is the unpardonable sin. Now I speak a parable unto you.

Of course, if a man commits suicide, and he's sane and he's lost, that he's unfaithful, and he's sane and he kills himself, naturally he puts himself where he can't repent. He's out of the picture. God doesn't forgive out in the next world, He forgives in this world only.

I suppose in that sense, suicide can't be forgiven, but that's not what Jesus was talking about. And you dare read your own opinion into what Jesus taught us. He taught us something else altogether, and it's not suicide.

Let's put it like this. Suppose that a man decides that he's been around here long enough. He's disgusted with himself and with his wife and with the government and with income tax and jobs and dumb clerks and stenographers and mean policemen and sickness and weariness, and he just decides, well, I've been around here long enough.

So he gets himself an old rope and mounts into the attic. These modern apartment houses don't furnish any place for a man to go. The attic is the approved place, but there's no attic.

But suppose he margots into the attic and jumps off of a stool, but he misjudged the length of the rope, and all it does is knock him out. The wife hears a racket and comes up and hears he's hanging completely unconscious, but still alive. She cuts him down and slaps him back to life again, and he wakes up.

And usually when a suicide has been unsuccessful, they all want to live again. A fellow will jump in the water and then paddle like a dog for the shore. But he says, well, I've had enough of this.

I didn't think hanging would be so painful. So he decides that he won't commit suicide. A year later, he goes to an evangelistic meeting to a church, and he hears the gospel and says, why didn't I hear this before? And immediately gives his heart to the Lord and is converted.

Now, he was unconscious trying to commit suicide, and if his wife hadn't heard the stool fall over, he would have committed suicide. So as far as he was concerned, he was a suicide, but he didn't die. So God forgives him, and there's a lot of people like that that have been forgiven after they've tried suicide.

Now, suicide isn't the unpardonable sin, yet I repeat, if you want to use words loosely, you can say that if a man kills himself and dies, as they used to say, untriven, that is, without forgiveness, certainly he's gone, but he died just as any other sinner died. That was not the unpardonable sin of which Jesus spoke. And then another one is rejecting Jesus.

And this is the one the preachers are always talking about. I don't understand. I wish their preachers all listened to me.

But why they insist on making these mistakes, I don't know. They say rejecting Jesus is the unpardonable sin. How did they get that way? Where did they get the idea? Who told them? There's only one person in the Bible that ever talked about the unpardonable sin and explained it, and he didn't say it was rejecting Christ.

Now, if a man rejects Christ right down to the end of his life and dies rejecting Christ, naturally he won't be forgiven. But in that case, every sin he committed was unpardonable because he didn't accept Christ, nor repent of his sins, he died in his sin. But that's not the unpardonable sin.

Let's put it around like this again. I don't suppose there's a single Christian here that accepted Jesus the first time and the Holy Ghost tried to win him. I don't think so.

Rarely does anybody come to Christ the first time. They reject a while, they resist a while, they say no a few times, and some say no for years. And that's rejecting Jesus.

And if rejecting Jesus is the unpardonable sin, then they never could be pardoned. But after a week or a month or a year or two years or five years, the pressure of their conscience and of the pleadings of God's people and the prayers of the saints becomes too much. And down they go and give their hearts to the Lord and rise in newness of life.

Rejecting Jesus was not the unpardonable sin, because they'd rejected him a long time and still been pardoned. Now, it may be you've heard that all your life, that rejecting Jesus was the unpardonable sin, and it's hard, of course, to brainwash anybody that has a wrong notion about the unpardonable sin. Now, the next thing is why, or what it is.

What is the unpardonable sin? All right, let us go back to Mark again. Scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils. Verse 28, Verily I say unto you, all sin shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemers, wherewithsoever they shall blaspheme.

But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation. Verse 30, This he said, because they had said, He hath an unclean spirit. There's your explanation.

Our Lord has given it. So, no one dare change that now. Nobody dares introduce anything.

It's here, the Lord has said it. He said that it was calling him a devil, and attributing to the devil the work he'd been doing by the Holy Ghost. He said, If I by the finger of God cast out devils.

He'd been casting out devils in the Spirit by the Holy Ghost, and they had said it is by the devil that he cast out spirits. But it was by the Spirit that he was casting out evil spirits. So they had attributed to the devil the

works of the Holy Ghost, and that is the unpardonable sin.

And verily I say unto you, that he that doth this, doeth this, hath no forgiveness, but his sin will be with him forever. And though the foulest mouth blaspheme him, and the resister, and the curser, and the liar, and the thief, may be forgiven. When we attribute to the devil, to devils, to demons, for that's what the word means, the work of the Holy Ghost, that is the unpardonable sin.

Now, why can it not be forgiven? It is a sin. Why then select that sin and say, Now that sin marks a man forever, and brands him with the mark of Cain. He never can be pardoned.

Well, in Matthew 12, 32, there's quite an explanation there. And he tells us that to speak against the Son is unpardonable. You can blaspheme the Son of God and be pardoned.

And many who blasphemed the Son of God as he hung on the cross were later pardoned. And many who have cursed Jesus Christ, many a Jew who spits when he hears the name of Jesus, had later been converted, and now he's ashamed and sorry, but he knows it's not unpardonable. He blasphemed the name of Jesus, but God pardoned him because he knew he was ignorant, and when he repented, he forgave.

So that to speak against the Son is pardonable. But to speak against the Spirit is not, and why? You read Matthew 12, 32 and follow me. Well, the Father or the Son may be external to a man.

One of the greatest evangelists, for the moment I can't think of his name, but he was one of the greatest evangelists of Moody's time, and a little before. He had been an atheist and gone around delivering speeches against God and Christ, and was converted and went back on the platform as an evangelist. Now, reason and the weakness of the flesh and bad information and fear may influence a person to speak against God, and it may also influence a person to speak against Christ.

Many a Jew raised in a Hebrew, rigorous Hebrew home of Orthodox Jewry, he's been taught that that's a bad name. He spits when he mentions that name. He's been taught wrongly.

He's ignorant. Reason, he's all messed up. He's confused.

Tradition and bad doctrine has spoiled him. That's not the unpardonable sin. He can spit and curse Christ, and if he believes and repents later, he'll be converted, because that's external to the man.

God's external to the man. Christ's external to the man. And so the flesh, I say, and fear and hopes and ignorance and bad instruction can lead a man to speak against God or Christ.

But brother, the Holy Ghost is that distilled essence of the Godhead, and he is not external. He goes direct to the human spirit, and he communicates himself inwardly and intimately. And there is the profoundly mystical element in Christianity.

Christianity is not built around, nor does it rise out of, an external God. But it is built around and rises out of that God made internal by the Holy Ghost. So God on his throne running his universe, Christ at his right hand, leading for the church, maybe external to the man.

But when the Holy Ghost has come, he will convict the world. He is here. And so he communicates himself inwardly, past reason, past teaching, past everything to the moral perception, to the conscience, to the spirit of the man.

And spirit impinges on spirit, and the blessed life-giving spirit of the universe, the spirit of God the Father and God the Son, impinges upon the spirit of man, clear into the precincts beyond that man's reason, beyond his teaching, beyond his fears and prejudice, straight through to the ancient man, and anybody then, under those circumstances that can call this one a devil, has morally and spiritually deteriorated to the point of no return. I'm going to describe the people that Jesus described. They cannot distinguish good from evil.

They cannot distinguish God from Satan. And yet they are convinced of their own purity, and wholly unaware of their condition. And I say all this carried to the point of no return.

The man who curses God or challenges God to kill him, that may be up on the top of his head here. You need poor little old dark brain cells. But after the Holy Ghost has penetrated through past a man's defenses, through to the sacred sanctum, and there has made himself known, and then we turn and say, this is the demon, this is the devil, this is done by the devil.

And when a man full of the Holy Ghost stands before that man, and he in his blind fury says, that's a devil in you, as they did of Jesus, that's it. A deterioration, a moral and spiritual deterioration has taken place here. There's been a breakdown in the cells of the spirit.

And that person can no longer distinguish good from evil. And the strange and ominous thing is, that they do usually live good lives. These people to whom Jesus spoke were good livers.

They were among the very best livers. They were Pharisees, they were scribes, they were rabbis, they were people who lived a moral life that not even our Lord could find fault with. And it was an external righteousness.

They didn't know the mysterious spirit. They didn't know God at all. He told them bluntly, you don't know God.

He said, you don't know the Father. You're the seed of Abraham, but you don't know God because you don't know the Holy Ghost. He's never come to you.

He's never left you. He can't talk to you. And yet you're living all right.

You're tithing your mint, and you're coming, and you're rooting, and you're living all right. Jesus never told a near-religious sinner that he'd committed the unpardonable sin. He only said that those who committed the unpardonable sin were religious people who were souls who had deteriorated, and their spirits had rotted to a point of no return where they couldn't know good from evil.

Oh, they knew stealing was wrong. They knew adultery was wrong. But there was something vastly, infinitely worse inside of them.

A devil lay within, a spirit of evil lay within, and they didn't know it. So they attributed that devil to the Holy Son of God, who were convinced of their own purity. And this was one of the things that Jesus fought against all the time he was on earth.

He went about everywhere telling them they were whited sepulchers, they were serpents, they were false teachers, they were liars, they were sons of the devil, because they were fully convinced of their own purity and wholly unaware of their condition. Here came among them the light, the light that lighted every

man. Here was among them the one who should rise from the Gentiles and shine to the uttermost parts of the earth, the very light of God in whom was no darkness was shining among them.

They looked it full in the face and said, it's darkness. To say anything else would have meant to repent, would have meant to turn on themselves, would mean to admit that they were wrong. I'm going to say something to you here, but I'll stand back up.

So don't come to me and say, Mr. Toter, don't you think that is extreme? No, I wouldn't have said it if I had. Here it is. There are people, and they hang around churches, too, a lot of them.

They will go to hell before they will ever admit that they themselves are wrong. They simply can't think. They will pray, O Lord, we're no good, filthy rags, but it never occurs to them that means me, my ego, myself.

They don't want to lose face. They don't want to admit it's I, Lord, it's I. No, they're right, I've met them. And there will be lovely, nice people until you cross them or suggest they were wrong on something.

And then blind, black fury leaps out of their hearts. They will not believe that they're not wrong. Such persons either have committed or are on their way to commit the unpardonable sin.

The religious person that will go to the altar when 25 others go and cover up his own personal needs, that will testify humbly as long as others testify, so that he can hide himself in the group and lives his life carefully so as to protect his own ego, but never breaks, never honestly repents, never. He may pray and pray and ask for prayer requests and say, would you pray, and this man should be prayed for, and I think we ought to pray. But just cross him, just let him know that you think he isn't perfect.

Black fury will leap out, just as it did here. These were religious people, that Jesus had come and healed the sick and then said to the sick, now here's Rabbi so-and-so, a wonderful leader, I want you to meet him. If he said to some fellow that he'd cast the devil out of, come over here, Abraham, I want you to meet Rabbi Ben-Ammi here, I want you to come and see him.

He's a wonderful leader in Israel. If Jesus had rubbed their fur the right way and scratched their backs and given them degrees and told them how wonderful they were, they'd have gone along with Jesus. But they were wrong and he knew it, and his way and theirs intersected.

And where they intersected, fire flew, because they would not believe they could be wrong. They were on their way to, or had already committed, the unpardonable sin. For it's an ingredient in this condition that we're perfectly sure we're right.

Now, any sin that is repented will be forgiven. But there is a sin that can never be repented, because to commit it, the heart first has to be beyond repentance. How can we know that we've not committed? Well, no one can ever know that he has.

At least if I take my Bible for it here, and I've been now, it's been a long time, I'm not telling you how long, but brother, it's been longer than some of you, your father and mother hadn't even met. Some of them hadn't even been born. And I've been reading my Bible and studying it and praying and thinking and finding out all I could find out.

And if I have arrived at anything like truth on this, then I am safe in saying that no one can ever know that he has committed the unpardonable sin for the simple reason is he doesn't believe he could. And he laughs it off, scornful, for the reason given above. He has deteriorated to the point of no return.

Like the brain cells that are injured, doctors will say I'm awfully afraid that brain cells are so badly injured. They can never be put back. You can mend a broken arm.

You can graft skin on a burnt face. You can put a tube in some place, even in the windpipe. You can do a lot of things.

But when brain cells break down, there's no putting them back. That's deterioration to the point of no return. And these who committed it didn't know they had and never can know they had, because before they could, they had arrived at a place where they couldn't know they had.

Now, I think I told you this before, but I want to tell you again. I told it over there, I think, the other day. Several years ago, over at Dula Beach, Ohio, a young woman wanted to talk with me, and I said, all right, right after dinner.

We sat right here on the porch. So after dinner, we sat down there on the porch together, and she had a friend with her, some woman older than she. She'd committed the unpardonable sin this woman had.

And I went and told her she hadn't, told her why, and dismissed her, and she went away very joyful and said, oh, thank you, thank you. And she believed everything I said. But I hadn't more than left the beach till I got a long letter from her.

She had all right, committed the unpardonable sin. I wrote her a letter back, told her again that she hadn't, and told her why. And I think I got an acknowledgment saying, oh, thank you.

That comforts me very much. I know I have. And then I was over in Hawthorne, New Jersey, Ridgewood, New Jersey, I think to be exact, where I was staying at the time.

I was preaching in Hawthorne. Phone rang, and they said, long distance. And I went to the phone with this woman in Ohio.

She had, I guess, called my wife and found out where I was, and called me there, said, Mr. Stokes is back on me again. I know I've committed the unpardonable sin. Well, I told her again, and she meekly said, thank you, sir.

Always called me sir so nicely. All right, thank you, sir. Thank you, sir.

And I said, well, here it is again. And I went to finish my meal, and almost dismissed her from my mind. And I didn't forget all about the woman for about a year.

At the end of that time, a letter came. Oh, what a letter. It leaped and danced like the leaves of the forest.

And I opened it up, and she said, I have been ashamed to write to you. Shortly after this, that last time that I talked with you, God wrought the deliverance in my life. And she said, oh, what a joyful life I'm living now.

And she said, I should have written long ago to tell you it was okay. You didn't have to pray for me now. It was all well.

But she said, I was just ashamed. She said, wasn't I awful the way I acted? Well, she was. But she was in trouble.

She thought she'd committed the unpardonable sin. But I don't know who reached her. I guess maybe a little something, I said, plus a lot of prayer and help on other people's part found her.

I think she's from Cleveland, if I remember. But what a joyful woman she was when she wrote that last letter. Well, I wrote and said, thanks very much, and that was that.

Now, I want to describe the fellow who hasn't committed the unpardonable sin. He's uncertain whether he has or not, and is all badly confused about what the unpardonable sin is. You can write his name mighty high, he hasn't committed it.

If he had, he wouldn't be uncertain at all. He would know he hasn't. And he wouldn't be confused, he would be as clear as daylight.

That he was one of the saints, and would be getting a three-way mirror to look at his head in order that he might know what side is crowned over. He'd be perfectly sure of himself. But the fellow who's uncertain and confused and downcast and in trouble.

I went to a doctor one time years ago, this was in Cleveland too. Went to a doctor, old good many years ago. I was having pains.

And he sat me down and talked with me. He said, I can tell you fellas want to see you come through the door. I said, what is it? I said, nerves, nerves.

And he gave me a dad and picked me up and sent me out. But I didn't like that so well. I had to look about me like a dyspeptic.

I didn't know how to look like a dyspeptic. And I got over that and didn't have any trouble anymore. But I did, and he knew me.

He said, I know you fellas want to see you come. I didn't like to think I fell into a category. But I know these people who think they've committed an unpardonable sin.

Phone rings, told her, yes, well this is so-and-so, never heard of him. Could I see you next week? Yes. Well, what's time convenient for you? Well, could it be to one o'clock? I work until noon.

Yeah, all right, one o'clock. So I hurry through my lunch hour and come back one o'clock and he comes in. I know he's a spiritual dyspeptic.

He is just in one little easy jump of a happy, joyous Christian life. But he's a gloomy, dyspeptic. He thinks he's committed an unpardonable sin.

Always be sure he hasn't. For if he had, he would make broad his phylacteries and make big his Bible and bulge his tracts. And would come in without a trace of penitence, without a trace of humility.

He hadn't committed the unpardonable sin. He'd never think of it. So the fella who's discouraged and gloomy and despondent and worried about himself, don't bother your head about him.

Pray that God will show him the facts. He hadn't committed the unpardonable sin. And the fella that goes around asking questions and writing in the Moody Monthly and King's Business, Our Hope, someone wanting to know what's the unpardonable sin, he hasn't committed it.

You never heard of any of those Pharisees coming to Jesus and saying, oh master, I'm afraid I've committed the unpardonable sin. Never one of them. None of the rabbis ever came to him and said, oh master, I'm afraid, I'm afraid I've gone to the point of no return.

Not one of them. Anybody had come to Jesus like that, and they might easily have, and probably did, some of them. He'd have said, father forgives and pardons all sins unto the sons of men.

Thou canst believe, thou let him out into the light. So anybody who's worried about whether he has committed the unpardonable sin hasn't. Anybody who's uncertain and confused hasn't.

Anybody who's distressed to the point where he's asking questions and asking people to pray for him, he hasn't. Anybody who's become so frightened he can't pray anymore, and I've met some of them. They think they've committed the unpardonable sin, and they always go to the Bible and look up the verses that do them harm.

They always look up the passage that says, say the tenth of Hebrews and the sixth of Hebrews, there remaineth therefore no more sacrifice for sin. They wag their head and go out. If that described them, they'd never have come in.

The self-righteous man never worries that there's no more sacrifice for sin. The self-righteous man whose spiritual life has deteriorated until he's capable of committing the unpardonable sin, he never worries for fear there's no hope for him, and he's never frightened. He can pray, sure he can pray.

He can pray to the Father he knows as his friend, because he's got the covenant. But in his deep heart of hearts, he doesn't know God from the devil. In his deep heart of hearts, he doesn't know good from evil.

He only knows external good and external evil, but he's never become acquainted with the depth of depravity in his own heart. And he'd crucify God before he would admit himself a sinner. It's all right for you to admit yourself a generic sinner.

There are many a man who believes in total depravity that thinks it's touched everybody but him. Now, if you ask him, he'd say, oh, certainly, certainly. I was born in sin, conceived in iniquity, and all my righteousness are filthy rags.

But he doesn't believe that. He's lying to his own soul. Cross him sometime, challenge him sometime, charge him with doing something wrong sometime.

See what he'll do. Blow up, turn red, curse you out. Well, the inability to feel spiritual distress is a mark of a terrible condition.

I don't say it's a proof of the unpardonable sin. I say it's a proof that we're on our way to it. Oh, I can't say too often.

If you can be sorry for sin, thank God for the ability to be sorry. Some people can't. Some religious people can never be sorry.

Their religion lies in texts, forms. In fact, they were sprinkled, took communion, confirmed. But there's never been anything inside, and they're deteriorating fast.

Wouldn't you feel terrible if the doctor would say to you, I'm awfully sorry to tell you, I wish you'd bring your wife down? And you and your wife would sit there, and the doctor or specialist would say to you, now, I'm sorry to tell you this, but your brain is deteriorating. You've got a strange disease, and the cells are breaking down one after the other. And before very long, you won't even be able to tell your own name.

You won't know your people. Wouldn't you go home blue? Wouldn't that be awful? I'd go home and say to my people, well, that's what he told me. Now, expect anything from here on in.

And how much worse to know that by self-righteousness and self-love and a brassy unwillingness ever to admit we're wrong, basically wrong, have deteriorations taking place in many lives, religious lives. I don't say saved people. Saved people can't commit the unpardonable sin.

A saved man cannot commit the unpardonable sin. These were not saved people. They were religious people.

There's a vast difference. But to know that that deterioration takes place, to know that it's taking place, and little by little, the spirit is getting obtuse, eyes are going out, blindness is coming on, deafness is taking over. And pretty soon, it'll be confined within its own skull.

But nobody ever knows that. Nobody ever knows it because the people it's happening to would laugh at me for preaching and scorn and curse Jesus for saying so and say, ah, you've got the devil. I'm a Jew.

Look at me, circumcised at the age of death. My lineage is in the temple. I know who I'm born of.

I'm not born of fornication. What are you talking about? Didn't I say you were a devil and were crazy? He knew who he was. I'm a Methodist.

I'm a Baptist. I heard Dr. Simpson preach. I give two missions.

I prayed all night one night within a day. But you'll never believe how bad you are. I'll tell you a little penitence will go a long way, a little sorrow for sin.

Ah, two men went up into the temple to pray. One stood and thus and prayed with himself, O God, I thank thee I am not as other men. The other man bowed his head on his chest, beat that same chest and said, God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

And the Lord smiled and said, ah, that's what I like to hear him talk. And he went down to his house justified. I said to Philip Newell over the phone the other day, the two classes of men they tell me in the world, the good people who think they're bad and the bad people who think they're good.

And I never met a real Christian in my life. Never met a Christian in my life who was a humble follower of the Lord Jesus Christ that ever believed the amount of anything. You always take the humble low place and admit you're no good.

For the world is filled with people who think they're good and aren't, and with Saints who are only too ready to admit they're no good. All the righteousness is of God. I don't want to close on this low, funereal note.

I want to give you some scripture here. God gave this to me a few years ago as certainly as if it had been given to me by divine inspiration. Now, it was here several hundred years before I was ever thought of, or born even.

But God gave this to me. Did you ever have God give you a chapter? Did you? Ever have God give you a chapter it was just as real to you as if nobody else had ever read it? And for a moment you wondered if they ever had. Well, God said to me, Fear thou not, for thou shalt not be ashamed.

Neither be thou confounded, for thou shalt not be put to shame. For thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth. Oh, that's not the way it should be read.

For thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth. And shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy maker is now thine husband, the Lord of hosts his name.

The Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth shall he be called. For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment.

But with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is of the waters of Noah unto me. For as I have sworn the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee nor rebuke thee.

Now I've taken verse 9 as certainly for me as if it had never been written for anybody else in the universe. God promised he'd never get angry with me again. That worries me a little bit.

No, I can get worried about more blessed things. So the other day I was telling God up here in my study, now Father this sounds awful, this is terrible. Suppose I do a lot of things I shouldn't.

He promised he'd never rebuke me nor get angry with me as long as the world goes on. Suppose I do things I shouldn't. Something said in my heart, I know how to handle my children.

I'll take care of that. I'll discipline you. I'll chastise you.

I'll make you sweat. I'll bring you around. I'll see to it you don't get away with anything.

But I'll never be angry with you. And I'll never be wroth nor rebuke you while the world stays. For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall my covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on me.

Mercy on me. In righteousness thou shalt be established. Whose righteousness? You answer me.

Whose? His. Thou shalt be far from oppression, for thou shalt not fear, and from terror for it shall not come near thee. Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me.

You'll have a lot of enemies. They'll get a lynching bay up for you, but not by me. I didn't send them.

Whosoever shall gather against thee shall fall for thy sake. Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work. And I have created the waters to destroy, and no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper.

And every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn, for this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord. So I took off the old coat called tozer and put on the robe called my righteousness, that is, Christ's righteousness, not worried about myself, because I know I belong in hell. And the man who knows he belongs in hell can't go there, because that's the penitent man.

The penitent soul can't perish. You're a penitent soul. Oh, that we might be penitent, solemnly for sins, willing to confess and admit and acknowledge.

That kind of soul can never die. That kind of soul can never commit an unpardonable sin. And God has spoken.

Arise, my soul, arise, shake off thy guilty fears, guilty fears, the bleeding sacrifice on my behalf appears. All the self-righteous crowd deteriorating, going to pieces, breaking down, going to the point of no return, righteous, moral, living well, going to church, but never suspecting nor dreaming how bad they are. For them there is no repentance.

For them there is no forgiveness. Their sin will be with them forever. But the man who beats his breast and says, God have mercy on me, the sinner, he can't perish.

He can't. No, he can't commit the unpardonable sin. Penitence, my brother.

I plead it. I ask it. Learn to repent.

Dr. R. Brown once said in this pulpit, we have lost the art of repentance, the holy art of repentance. It's that that keeps us healthy. It's that that keeps us right with God.

So learn to repent. Learn to be penitential. Every day tell God about yourself.

And then every day say, arise my soul, arise. I was a guilty sinner, but Jesus died for me. These two things must be held in suspension in the human mind.

How bad I was, how good God is. How evil I was, how powerful the blood is. How certainly I'm bad and how wonderful the grace of God is to save the bad man.

These two things must always be before us. Maybe way out there in the consummation when we see him and his name is on our forehead, maybe we'll forget our record. But until we do, let's keep two things before us.

How bad we were, and how wonderfully powerful the dying lamb is, or was and is now that he's at the right hand of the Father. Keep those two things before you and you have nothing to worry about. So any of you gloomy people, you spiritually skeptics that are going around lashing yourself like a flagellante, making fun of our Roman Catholic friends, and you're doing penance every day, hating yourself, wishing you were dead and hadn't been born, calling yourself names, thinking you've committed the unpardonable sin.

No, no, you're just not looking in the right direction, you're looking inside. I beg of you, look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith, and you'll forget about yourself for a little while.

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