

Our final presentation deals with a most solemn subject. What constitutes the only sin God can't forgive? I've met those who have committed a certain sin. People who have felt so guilty that they feel that God could no longer want them or hear them. They believe that they're too bad for God now, they feel certain they have committed the unpardonable sin that the Bible speaks about.

Some have felt its murder. But the Bible says Moses murdered and he was forgiven. Some say it must be adultery. Yet Mary committed adultery and she was freely forgiven by Christ. In fact David was guilty of adultery and murder in the same sorry episode, and yet the Bible could say of him "he was a man after God's own heart." Some say it's cursing God. But that's not it either, for Peter cursed Jesus to His face and He forgave him.

What, then, is the unpardonable sin?

Matthew 12 verses 31- 32 He tells us what the unpardonable sin is.

³¹And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³²Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

It's the sin against the Holy Spirit that is not forgiven. Why is it you can curse God and be forgiven? Yet on the other hand, the sin against the Holy Spirit is so serious it can't be forgiven? What is the difference between sin against God and man, ve sin against the Holy Spirit? Well essentially the Holy Spirit's work is to lead us out of sin and toward God.

Sin Against the Spirit COMISSION and OMISSION

COMISSION

(Against God & Man)

Commit - Murder

Commit - Swearing

Commit - Lying

Commit - Adultery

OMISSION

(Against the Holy Spirit)

Omit following truth

Omit forsaking sin

Omit doing righteousness

Omit full surrender

The unpardonable sin is not so much a sin on it's own as it is the sin of persistently rejecting the call of God to surrender and follow Him –it's not a single act, but a continual and persistent rebellion against the Holy Spirit. Now I promised you earlier in the series that we would look at the parable of the Rich man and Lazarus. Well tonight's the night – because you see far from this being a teaching about what happens after we die, we are going to see tonight that Jesus

was addressing our subject for tonight – the unpardonable sin. Let's look together at Luke chapter 16. Let's read through it together.

¹⁹"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. ²⁰At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores ²¹and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. ²²"The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' ²⁵"But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. ²⁶And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' ²⁷"He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, ²⁸for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' ²⁹"Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' ³⁰" 'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' ³¹"He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.' "

As you can imagine, this parable is often used to support the two prominent teachings even within Christianity today:

Can you guess what they are?

1. Immortal Soul

(Bible teaches that death is a sleep)

2. Eternal Torment in Hellfire

(Bible teaches the wages of sin is death – the Second death)

We've covered both these topics in some detail during this series, so we don't need to spend much time explaining these here, but for the benefit of revision, let's just remind ourselves what the Bible teaches on these two topics:

Death as a Sleep vs. Immortal soul

- Death described as sleep eg Matt 9:24
- Dead in Christ are Resurrected at the 2nd coming of Christ (1st resurr) (1 Thess 4, Rev 20)
- Dead wicked are Resurrected at the 3rd coming of Christ (2nd resurr) Rev 20)
- Jesus dead in tomb – not yet ascended to Father
- Dead know nothing (Psalms)
- Entire Scripture is consistent from Genesis to Revelation inc. Thief on cross

2nd Death vs. Eternal Torment

- Wages of sin is (2nd) death – 'perish'
- Lake of Fire is the second death Rev 20:14

- Lake of fire takes place on Earth – after that, the earth is made new
- Some scriptures seem ambiguous – but a little study answers these
- God’s character is consistent with the teaching of the wicked perishing, not burning for eternity.

With this background let us go now to the parable.

Scene 1

Lazarus, a poor man is brought to the gates of the rich man because he needs help so badly he can’t help himself. This guy Lazarus is such a sorry sight he can’t even prevent the dogs from licking his sores!

Lazarus is so hungry he pleads for some of the scraps that fall from the rich man’s table. In those days there was no welfare system like we have today, no Work and Income NZ, so the poor were brought to the rich who had the means to care for them. It was the responsibility of those who had to help those who had not.

But all of this responsibility was wasted on the rich man. The affairs of his own life consumed him to the point where he was able to pass Lazarus and the dogs every day, and never stop to help.

Scene 2

Well, as the parable goes, **death comes to both men and the scene changes dramatically. In fact it’s a shocking reversal.**

Lazarus is taken off to Abraham’s bosom or side, and the Rich man is taken off to a place of eternal fire and torment called Hell. What happens next is a conversation between the flames of hell and the comforts of paradise.

Clearly we can’t take this parable literally. If we were to do that then heaven would consist of being at Abraham’s side or on his bosom as some translations have it, where despite the wonders of paradise, unfortunately we would be able to see and hear people writhing away in torment. How many of you can imagine enjoying that?

Can you imagine that? Every time you decided to take a walk beside the sea of glass you heard the screams of hell calling for you to take them a drink? We’ve already learned that after the unrighteous are destroyed, God will wipe away every tear, and the former things will no longer be remembered. Clearly we are not to take this parable literally. So let me ask you – If we don’t go to heaven or hell at death. If, as we have learned the righteous go to heaven at the second coming of Christ and the unrighteous are dead for a thousand years, and instead of an eternal hell there will be a lake of fire that destroys sin once and for all, and after that Jesus will wipe away all tears and the memories of former things;

Why would Jesus speak like this? To answer this we need to take a look at Jesus was talking to, and what he was trying to tell them. We need the context in other words.

Let's take a look at chapter 15 and v1

Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Can you see the contrast in the two groups he is addressing? Then the next verse says that Jesus did what? Told them a parable. In fact he told them many parables – and what was the message he was trying to get across? Let's pick it up in chapter 16 v 13, Jesus says

¹³"No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

See the immense contrast again

¹⁴The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. ¹⁵He said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight."

Again can you see the contrast Jesus is making? Jesus is saying that the values of heaven and the values of earth are at OPPOSITE ends of the spectrum. What comes naturally to man is directly opposed the work of the Holy Spirit. And the Bible says that the Pharisees who loved money, heard all of this and were sneering at Jesus. It is into this context that Jesus tells the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. It's a parable of contrast and his purpose is to address their hardness of heart of the Pharisees, and was pointing out to them that their selfish lives were leading them to destruction.

And so he uses terminology that they will understand, in order to enter their world, and hold up a mirror in front of them so they can see themselves as they really are. You see the Pharisees believed that because they were descendents of Abraham, they would be saved, furthermore, because they were wealthy they were blessed of God. They believed that the Gentiles had no access to God, nor deserved it, and that the poor and destitute were like they were because God had cursed them. So why not treat them as second class citizens? With this understanding you can see how offensive the parable becomes to them as the rich man ends up in hell, and the beggar lands up in heaven by **Abraham's** side!!

But now notice what takes place. The rich man cries out to who? Not to God but to Abraham (symbolic of the Pharisee's belief that it was their bloodline that saved them) and asks for Lazarus to help him. Abraham's reply should forever silence those who believe in a second chance at salvation after a secret rapture! So now here we come to the crunch end of the parable – and I there are three things Jesus is about to teach us: See if you can see the first two in V24-26 “

²⁴So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'

²⁵"But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that **in your lifetime** you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. (there's the first one)

²⁶And besides all this, **between us and you a great chasm has been fixed**, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' (there's the second)

1. At death, our eternity is forever sealed.

No Second chances, our eternity is FOREVER sealed when we die.

2. Eternity is decided by how we live in this life

How we respond to God and others in this life, determines how we end up in the next. Consider that! It's a sobering thought! If you consider this life to be represented by a pencil dot on this page – then tell me how would we need to represent eternal life? It would be an everlasting line that would need to be drawn around and around the earth, the solar system, our galaxy and ever ongoing. And the difference between spending it with Christ and spending it dead is determined here, now, even tonight, in the decisions we make in this life. WOW! Now come to v 27-31 because Jesus is making his way to the punch line. The rich man realizing his fate is eternally fixed, cries out in v27

²⁷"He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, **send Lazarus to my father's house,** ²⁸**for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'** ²⁹"Abraham replied, '**They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'**

It's as though the rich man now blames God right? I ended up here because God didn't warn me! He's saying if only I had been told about FOREVER, and how important the decisions I made on earth were.

But the parable makes it clear that none of us will be able to blame God or anyone else for our attitudes, behaviours, or consequences in this life or the next. Not in the past, not in your childhood, your teen years, your adult life or the present. Nothing and noone can do anything to you that God cannot totally heal and more than that – use it to His Glory! But Abraham said he had been warned – how? **Who is Moses and the prophets? The Bible!** – but now see the reply in v 30

³⁰" 'No, father Abraham,' he said, '**but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'** ³¹"He said to him, '**If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'** "

What is the point of Jesus words?

3. Proud and selfish hearts are resistant to God's Word, and not even a miracle will change that.

The rich man cries out and says **send them someone back from the dead** to warn them. Give them a sign and they will turn to you, their hard hearts will melt, their skepticism will turn to faith, they will repent! And the sobering reply – **they have the Bible!** If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, **they will not be convinced** even if someone rises from the dead! Let me ask you do you think Jesus was overstating his point? Surely someone back from the dead would be enough to convince and turn even the hardest of hearts to God. Well perhaps it's coincidental, or perhaps it explains a great deal, but some of you may remember a miraculous event that took place about 3 weeks after Jesus told this parable – amazingly Jesus raised a man by the name of Lazarus from the dead.

Let's read about it in John 11

v 1-4 ¹Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ²This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair. ³So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." ⁴When he heard this, Jesus said, "**This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it.**"

v 11 ¹¹After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." ¹²His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." ¹³**Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.** ¹⁴So then he told them plainly, "**Lazarus is dead,** ¹⁵and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

v 17 **How long has Lazarus been dead?** ¹⁷On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb **for four days.**

v 23 ²³Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the **resurrection at the last day.**" ²⁵Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

v 43 ⁴³When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "**Lazarus, come out!**" ⁴⁴The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

Now come to chapter 12:1

12:1 ¹Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ²Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honour.

12:9 *9* Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. *10* So the chief priests **(repented and turned to God?)**

made plans to kill Lazarus as well, 11 for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him.

When we talk about the unpardonable sin, it's important to understand something. It is not the sin of ignoring the needs of others like our friend in the parable, it is not breaking the Sabbath, it is not bringing shame to your parents, it is not committing adultery, it is not stealing, or cheating or lying or coveting. It is not murder, it is not rape, it is not being a sexual offender as harmful as these things are. God's Holy Spirit can reach across all of these. It is not greed, malice, gluttony, envy, lust or hatred. It is the sin of refusing to surrender these sins to God.

The unpardonable sin is what happens when a person hardens their heart against the call of God, when a person grieves the Holy Spirit that convicts of sin, and calls us to a 100% surrender to God, to the point where they can no longer sense the Spirit of God calling them.

You see the Bible is clear that there is no one that seeks after God, all of us have gone our own way. We are by our very nature enemies of God, slaves to sin and selfishness. But because of His great love for us God has given us the gift of His Holy Spirit to speak to us and to call us to turn to Him. Where there is no Holy Spirit there can be no surrender to God. And where there is no surrender to God, there can be no repentance, or salvation. It's a deadly thing and the danger about it is that there's no discernable point at which it happens. It occurs unnoticed, but the result is eternal.

Look at what the Bible says is the work of the Holy Spirit. Why is His work so serious?

John 16:13, *13* But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come

1. Guides us to truth

It is here that people begin to commit the unpardonable sin.

As the Spirit tries to lead them to truth they are too busy, too indifferent, or too opinionated to be led.

It's equally important then to also **love the truth** enough to follow it!

Second Thessalonians 2:10-12 says many are lost because they received not the *love of the truth!*

2 Thessalonians 1:10-12 ¹⁰*and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.* ¹¹*For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie* ¹²*and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.*

The second work of the Holy Spirit is found in John 16:7-8

⁷*But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.* ⁸*When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:*

2. Reproves the World

"He will reprove the world of sin, righteousness and judgment." It's here again that many people begin to commit the unpardonable sin. Love for life as it is – too inconvenient. Love for sin – shrug it off

As the Spirit convicts of what we need to do to follow righteousness, we are often careless and shrug it off. That's resisting the Spirit. This is how we begin to commit the unpardonable sin. The Bible says, in **John 3:19**. ¹⁹*This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.*

We're condemned for staying in darkness once the light has come!

John 9:41 ⁴¹*Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.*

When we were in darkness ignorantly, we neither knew the beauty of truth nor the guilt of not following it! But when we sense God calling us to follow His will and we refuse to follow it we sin against the Holy Spirit!

James 4:17, ¹⁷*Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.*

When this realization hits the conscience one of two things happens. The heart hardens, and the spirit is rejected, or the heart melts and is converted. The same sun that melts wax, hardens clay.

3. The third work of the Holy Spirit is unification.

1 Corinthians 12:13 ¹³*For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.*

We are baptized into one body. It doesn't matter if you are black or white, educated

or uneducated, the Spirit will lead you to a body of believers who believe in all truth. A place where we can be welcomed into membership with His family, united with Him in his death, burial and resurrection, and begin a new life with His family, and begin working alongside Him in reaching out others. **It is here too that some are in danger of committing the unpardonable sin.** They are led to truth, they forsake sin and follow righteousness, but they refuse to be baptized into to the body of Christ. The Spirit patiently urges them to step out and become a strength to the body. While many joyfully take that step, others resist and never do. As they delay and wait, they are shutting out the Holy Spirit's voice.

In Acts 7:51 Stephen addressed some men who were resisting the Holy Spirit, in fact they took him outside shortly after and threw stones at him till he was dead. And here we come to the **most common reason** given for rejecting the Holy Spirit.

Acts 7:51 ⁵¹*"You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!"*

Here Stephen tells them they are resisting the Spirit for two reasons.

1. "You are just like your fathers"

It is for this reason more than any other that men and women today commit the unpardonable sin. The pull of family, its social structure, and the approval of those closest to them **means more than the approval of God.**

Matthew 10:37-38 ³⁷*"Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me."*

You see Jesus doesn't call us to approve of him, or to like him. He calls us to die to ourselves and to surrender our lives to him. As our creator and Lord he calls us to put him first before the wishes of our family and our friends – sadly many turn back from this.

2. Acts 7:53 - another reason people reject the Holy Spirit, ⁵³*you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it*

This is the second major reason people commit the unpardonable sin. They just refuse to follow God completely. They won't follow all of His commandments. They'll follow the ones that don't interfere with their lives too much, but their love for God stops there. Well we've spent most of this study on the sin of grieving the Holy Spirit, let's close our series with what it is on God's heart, that each of us respond to the Holy Spirit.

Friends, we learned last night that God has been restoring truth throughout the history of our world, preparing a people who will bring the news of his soon coming to the world. Just as John the Baptist was called to prepare the way for Christ at his first coming, God has a remnant in the last days who are called to prepare the earth for his second coming. And although throughout those ages his people have faced

different circumstances, have suffered trial and loss and persecution, from the first through to the last they will always have one thing in common – do you know what it is?

They remain faithful to Jesus – they are 100% surrendered. Following God and walking with Him is their aim, their goal, their highest joy. And in these last days we learn in Revelation not only to look forward to His coming, but to take the gospel to the entire world. “They are a people who keep His commandments and have the faith and testimony of Jesus Christ.”

You see the Holy Spirit has your eternal best in mind. He calls you to follow Jesus, the only one able to give you life, and the only one who loved you enough to come to find you. The Holy Spirit calls you and I to respond wholeheartedly to him. To surrender our lives to him – our Saviour, our redeemer and friend.

As we close this series together let me ask you – will you respond wholeheartedly to the Holy Spirit? I pray that you will. The studies we have shared together in this series bear the most wonderful and fearful prophecies we could ever read and understand. What makes the difference is simply our response to God – those who accept his grace wholeheartedly, and bring their whole lives to him in surrender to his Leadership.

These are those who will join him on that distant shore to be with him forever. I pray that you will resolve in your heart that you will be there. Determine in your heart never to grieve the Holy Spirit – but instead to follow him every day – until we meet on that distant shore.