

Monthly Study

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[0 : 0 0] This morning I think we will venture into a little change, have a completely different kind of study than what we have engaged in in the past.

We have not by any manner of means exhausted the prophetic themes, but we are going to give those a rest. And for the last couple sessions we were dealing with the ministry of the Holy Spirit and what it meant to be filled with the Spirit, led by the Spirit, and so on.

And we will pursue that if you wish to, and if you have questions or observations you would like to make in connection with that, because we aren't really locked into anything.

But this morning we are going to engage a study that probably most of you, maybe even all of you, have already resolved in your own mind and heart. But in case there is someone that hasn't, then it could be especially worthwhile.

And not only that, but you may be given some information that would enable you to render some real help to people who are struggling with this issue.

[1 : 0 1] I frankly find it kind of difficult to get my mind around it, but from all I have read and heard over the years, this is a major issue, really big, troublesome question, that actually causes a lot of people to lose sleep at night.

And they are people who profess a personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet, and yet this is an issue that nags them. They have some ogre, some monster in their past that they have not been able to get over.

They thought maybe it was behind them, but maybe it isn't. And what we are talking about is the unpardonable sin. What is that?

And who is capable of committing it and the consequences of it? Because the very term is daunting. I mean, just the idea, the name, the unpardonable sin.

Is there such a thing now? No. Was there ever? Yes. And therein lies the difference.

[2 : 1 8] So, let's go first of all to the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 12, if we may. Matthew, chapter 12.

And I will do my best to remind myself that this would be more profitable if it were a discussion rather than just a straight, flat-out lecture.

So, I want you to feel free to inject anything at any point along the way. Just raise your hand or wave or start talking or whatever. And we will stop right there and deal with whatever is on your mind.

Because it is a very, very important subject. And it is, like I said, it's one that's caused a lot of people sleepless nights. And it ought not to be so.

You know, there are so many positive consequences to being a believer in Christ. They are almost innumerable.

[3 : 1 5] Matter of fact, Dr. Lewis Perry Chafer has compiled a list. He was the founder of Dallas Theological Seminary back in the 1930s.

And he compiled a list of 33 different things that become immediately true of anyone who has put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

And then he gives scripture references for all of those. And we have taken the folks at the assisted living service where we conduct an informal service on Sunday afternoon at 2 o'clock.

And we've been doing this for, I guess, 10 years now. And we took that group through there, through that list of 23, 33 things. And it became quite apparent that many of them found this to be completely foreign material.

I mean, some of them had not been in a church at all. And some of them were in churches where they didn't learn very much and didn't know very much. So they might as well not have been there.

[4 : 19] But it was an interesting kind of experiment. And the subject of forgiveness, the degree to which we have it, and the peace of God that is supposed to issue from it, is just one of many of the positive benefits that belong to a believer in Jesus Christ.

Because if the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed. And to be tied up in knots and worrying and wondering, Have I, well, like in the issue that we've released called Connecting with God, I kind of opened the issue with the fact that over the years I have met so many people, and upon asking them whether heaven is their destiny and whether they are assured of God's forgiveness, where are they going after they die?

And nine out of ten, nine out of ten, that's not an exaggeration, the best they can muster is, I hope so. I hope so.

And all I can say is, what kind of assurance is there in a question mark? None at all. But when we are in Christ, we enjoy what the Apostle Paul referred to as, Having been forgiven all trespasses in Him.

The slate is clean. And there is nothing to fret and stew and worry about. The name of the game for the believer in Christ is rest and relax in the Lord.

[6 : 00] And you know one of the main things God wants you to do with your salvation? Is enjoy it. Enjoy it. Not endure it. But enjoy it.

So let's look at Matthew 12 and what sets the stage for this subject of the unpardonable sin. Then there was brought to Him, and we're dealing right now in the midst of our Lord's ministry, three and a half years on earth, A demon-possessed man who was blind and dumb.

I'm sorry, verse 22. Chapter 12 and verse 22. Yeah. This man has a double whammy, if you will.

Blind and dumb. And he healed him so that the dumb man spoke and saw. Now, this is not your ordinary miracle.

I mean, if this man was dumb, who knows? Maybe he had never spoken. Maybe he had never seen. We're not told that he was born that way. But he's demon-possessed.

[7 : 11] And I've got a lot of questions about this demon-possession thing. And I'd like to get into that with this group, because I've got some very unusual information to share with you about that.

And some of you have already seen it. It is remarkable. We don't know very much about demon-possession, but we do know that it is a reality, and we have reason to believe that it was a lot more common during our Lord's earthly ministry.

And I don't know if we can say that during those three and a half years, Satan pulled out all the stops to oppose Christ in any and every way he could.

And this may very well have been one of them. I don't know. But when the text simply says, And he healed him so that the dumb man spoke and saw, and all the multitudes were amazed.

I want to stop right here and inject something, because this is really, really important. If they were amazed, if they were able to authenticate the miracle, would not that, you would think, automatically result in their placing Christ as their authority, look to him as the one who was able to back up whatever he says about himself, that it is true about himself, that this one is worthy of our trust, it almost seems axiomatic that they would do that.

[8 : 51] And many did. But what can we say about those who did not? And here is a dichotomy that exists when it comes to the issue of belief.

There are those who do not believe because they have not been honestly, intellectually satisfied. But when they are, and they are capable of being intellectually satisfied, when they are, they come to faith.

Then there are others who belong to the crowd for whom it doesn't make any difference how much the evidence is, or how overpowering the evidence is, they are not going to believe.

They don't have an intellectual problem. They have a moral problem. It is not a question of evidence.

It's a question of the will. I will not believe because I don't want to believe. And I don't want the consequences or what would be involved with that belief if I did.

[10 : 00] So they hold on to their autonomy as though they are entitled to it. And you've got both kinds in the crowds that Jesus ministered to.

We look at so many of the instances, and I'll just digress here for just a moment, but when Jesus excoriates some of his audience, particularly those of Chorazin and Bethsaida, and he denounces them and he says, Woe unto you if the mighty miracles done in you.

By the way, Chorazin and Bethsaida were fishing villages located right on the coast of Galilee where Jesus was from in the north. If the mighty miracles done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, and what makes that so striking is these are Gentiles.

These aren't even Jews. Tyre and Sidon's over on the coast. He said, They would have repented. These people did not. And he assigns to them a greater judgment because unto whom much is given shall much be required.

And these people had miracle after miracle after miracle and still they refused to believe. That's very significant. And you know what?

[11 : 23] There are lots of people like that today. You can talk to people sometimes so you're blue in the face. You can defeat all of their arguments. You can answer all of their objections. And they still won't believe. Remember talking to Art Crawford one time and he said that he was going to drive from Columbus to Cleveland.

and he had a working colleague that had just been hired on the last couple of weeks and they were going up to look into some sophisticated something or other having to do with balancing things.

And as they got in the car and prepared for the drive to Cleveland this fellow said, I hear that you're a preacher of some sorts. And Art said, Well, he said, I preach on Sundays and I pastor at Riverside Bible Church and really enjoy it.

And so on. He said, well, I don't go into any of that religious stuff. He says, but I respect those who do. I know some very fine people who church people thus and so, thus and so.

He said, to make this trip a little more interesting, why don't we have some kind of a debate? And Art said, well, okay, what would you like to debate? And he said, I'd like to debate what you think is the strongest point that you've got for Christianity.

[12 : 36] And Art said, well, that's easy. That's the resurrection of Christ from the dead. You believe that? Well, yes, yes, I believe that. The Bible teaches that. You believe the Bible too, huh?

Well, yeah, I do. Well, okay, why don't you give me your best argument then for Christ being raised from the dead? Okay, so, he spelled out what he thought were the strongest points, which, by the way, are overwhelming to anybody that's honest.

And by the time they pulled in the parking lot to where they were going in Cleveland, God got out of the car, put his hands on his hips and says, I hate to admit this, but you've convinced me.

I think you're right. The arguments are unanswerable. I, I, I have to admit that. I'll give you that, Art. I have to admit that. And Art says, you do?

And the guy says, well, yeah. He said, I, yeah, I thought through each point with you and I can't refute it. It's, it's either true or it isn't true and I, I think you've got a case. I think it's true.

[13 : 44] And Art says, you want to receive Christ as your Savior then? Oh, I don't want to do that. That'd mess up my whole life.

Now that's a problem of the will. He's got the evidence. He even bought the evidence. Some of these people are going to witness firsthand the miracles that Christ performed unable to dispute them.

Do you think this man, demon possessed, blind and dumb, do you think the people in that community where he lived were completely unaware of him? And these were almost all small communities.

I would venture to say probably everybody knew this guy. He was a crazy one. He couldn't talk and he was, you know, he was just, you keep your distance from this guy. And he was demon possessed and we don't know what all that involved.

And the multitudes were amazed and began to say, this man cannot be the son of David. Now keep in mind, David been dead and buried for a thousand years when Jesus came on the scene.

[15 : 01] They knew that whoever the Messiah would be when the Messiah came, he would have to be a direct descendant of David the king, of the tribe of Judah.

Jesus, by the way, is later going to be identified also as the lion of the tribe of Judah. And he is in that line unmistakably. Matthew 1 makes it clear. So does Luke 3.

Now they're asking the question, could this be the Messiah? Because they know that when Israel's Messiah comes, according to the prophets, he is going to have miraculous powers.

They ask a very legitimate question. This man cannot be the son of David, can he? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, now they've got to have an answer.

Because Jesus had just done something very convincing, and it is necessary that they be able to refute what he did and discount it. And they heard it and said, this man cast out demons only by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons.

[16 : 08] In other words, what miraculous powers Jesus is demonstrating, he has obtained from the prince of evil, from Satan himself.

He is the one who is empowering him. And knowing their thoughts, that's an interesting expression too, doesn't even say that he picked up on what they said, knowing their thoughts, he said to them, any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and any city or house divided against itself shall not stand.

In other words, he's saying that it would be counterproductive for Satan to cast out demons from someone who is demon-possessed, because that's like fighting against their own troops.

Nobody in their right mind is going to do that. Just a simple piece of logic. How shall his kingdom stand? And if I, by Beelzebul, which is simply another name for Satan or the adversary, if I cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out?

Now apparently there was some demon exorcism that was going on in connection with the time in which Christ was living, and he's asking the question then, where do they get their authority and their power?

[17 : 32] Consequently, they shall be your judges. But, on the contrary, if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Now this is a glorious theme, and as I've introduced it here a couple of times over the years, and we're dealing with this in detail now in volume 48 and 49 of Christianity Clarified, and I have labeled it what everything is all about.

Because this is it. It is this kingdom business. Because this kingdom has to do with the restoration, the rescue, the purging, and the restoring of the earth from its fallen state into which our first parents brought it.

And that is God's end game. That's the ultimate thing. And Jesus is here saying that the kingdom of God is among you if I have cast out demons by the power of God.

That is a demonstration and a confirmation that the kingdom of God has come upon you. How so? In his own person.

[18 : 53] In his own person. Because this is a very, very important concept so I've got to elaborate on it a little bit. This kingdom of God thing. Jesus is inseparable from the kingdom because he is the king.

And when the king comes he will have his kingdom with him. And this, the way this is interpreted has divided Christendom particularly Protestants for a long, long time.

And the idea that some propose is that when Jesus said and the text isn't here but it's in 10 Luke.

I can't tell you exactly where it is now but we can look it up if we want. And the phrase that is given Jesus says behold the kingdom of God is within you.

The kingdom of God is in you. And that has led our friends who hold to the position that there will not be a literal kingdom but it is a spiritual kingdom and they interpret that to mean that the kingdom of God exists in the life of every believer.

[20 : 08] That he is the possessor of the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven both are used interchangeably just by being a believer. But the problem is if you examine the context there Jesus is talking to the religious crowd that has made it very clear that they reject him and his teachings.

And he most certainly is not saying the kingdom of God is in you because they were not of that stripe at all. So that completely in the context just blows that right out of the water.

But what he meant was the kingdom of God is in your midst in his personhood because you see when the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God comes to earth it will result in the earth being purified it will result in the earth being cleansed it will result in the earth being restored to its original state.

This is the theme of the prophets in the Old Testament this is exactly what the end game is going to be and it is the restitution of all things spoken of by Peter in Acts chapter 3.

So when he said that he was identifying himself with that kingdom because where he the king is the kingdom is. And kingdom conditions kingdom conditions deal with the putting away of evil the putting away of sickness the putting away of death the putting away of crime of corruption of all of those things when the kingdom of heaven comes to earth.

[21 : 42] It is going to have a miraculous element to it. So that being the case it was necessary for Jesus if he is going to present himself as the Messiah of Israel to bring with him kingdom conditions.

That's the purpose of all the miracles. All of the miracles that Jesus performed were designed to counteract the negative effects of a fallen world.

But the kingdom of God or heaven come to earth is not going to be fallen. It's going to be restored. So in order for him to authenticate himself he has to be able to demonstrate he possesses kingdom conditions.

How could he do that? Right here in this text. He heals the blind. He gives hearing to the deaf. He enables the lame to walk.

He raises the dead. What is that? Those are kingdom conditions. They constitute the credentials of the Messiah. After all if one is to come who is to rescue and deliver Israel and be the savior of the world and restore all things as the second Adam that which was brought to ruin by the first Adam he better have something pretty special to offer.

[23 : 10] And he did. That was the primary purpose for the miracles that Jesus performed. It was not primarily to alleviate human suffering although I'm sure that was involved because Christ was a man of great compassion and he had respect for human suffering but this is something that even overrides that.

It has to do with establishing his Messiahship. Remember in John chapter 3 when Jesus confronted Nicodemus and Nicodemus says we know we know that you are one who has come from God for or because no man can do these miracles that you have done unless God be with him.

So Nicodemus was plugged into that and this is all part and parcel of the same package. Let's read on now. If I cast out demons by the spirit of God then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

that ties in. I trust you get the connection with what we just said. Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property unless he first binds the strong man then he will plunder his house.

He who is not with me is against me. This just establishes the point that there is no neutrality regarding Christ because those who are not with him are automatically against him.

[24 : 49] Even though they say things like, well I don't have anything against Jesus, I think he was a pretty cool guy. But if you are not in step with him and his salvation and his pardon, you are on the other side.

You are not with him, you are against him. And there is no middle ground. He was not with me is against me. He who does not gather with me scatters.

Therefore, for this is why, I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven.

And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him. Of course he's talking about himself here. And I think we pointed out to you, in times past, that Jesus often refers to himself in the third person.

And he is doing so here too. It's as though he is speaking of someone else, but in reality, of course, he's speaking of himself. And he frequently, most frequently, refers to himself as the Son of Man.

[25 : 58] That is his favorite title that he uses of himself. It shall not be forgiven him either in this age or in the age to come.

Either make the tree good and its fruit good. This is just a common thing that these people were very familiar with on a daily basis. Or make the tree rotten and its fruit rotten.

For the tree is known by its fruit. Here again, it's those who are with him, those who are against him. It's just another way of saying it. You brood of vipers. Now, that is not nice to call people a brood of vipers.

can we say that Jesus was not into being politically correct? And he did not care first and foremost for people's feelings, but he did care first and foremost for the truth and for people having the truth.

And when he calls them a brood of vipers, we would translate that you sons of snakes, which is pretty negative. how can you, being evil, speak what is good?

[27 : 08] For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man, out of his good treasure, brings forth what is good. The evil man, out of his evil treasure, brings forth what is evil.

And I say to you that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned.

Now, there are two other passages. We're not going to turn to them unless you want to do so, in which case we can. But they are parallel passages. One is found in Mark 3, and the other is found in Luke 12.

And what we want to do now is open this up for questions or comments and see what you make or what you have heard regarding the unpardonable sin, and have you ever encountered anybody who was fearful that they might have committed it?

So it's time to hear a little bit from you. Any questions? or comments? Yes. Okay. In the middle of verse 32, read a second half of it.

[28 : 12] Maybe I missed that when you were speaking. Did you ever speak against the Holy Spirit? It shall not be forgiven. Did you just talk about that in my message? Well, the speaking against the Holy Spirit is...

Let me put it this way. The miracles that Jesus performed, he performed through the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is what he meant when he said, if I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, etc., then the kingdom of God has come upon you. And he is associating himself with this, having derived his power from the Holy Spirit.

The blasphemy regarding the Holy Spirit is attributing the miracles that Christ performed, not to the Holy Spirit, but to Satan himself, the eligible.

That is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. That is taking the work that the Holy Spirit has performed and giving credit for it to Satan.

[29 : 24] Essentially, that is the unpardonable sin in this context. Now, who today is capable of committing that?

Pardon? Okay. Pardon? Those who reject Christ? Those who reject Christ?

Would you say that those who reject Christ have committed blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? This gets quite involved, but that's what we're here for, to get involved.

Okay. Okay. I think that someone wants to ask that they are pardoned their sin. Okay. The statement has been made.

Someone has said that it is the rejection of Christ that is the unpardonable sin. All right. Marie? Okay.

[30 : 40] That's a very, that's a very interesting connection there. And let me just elaborate a little bit on what she said, because I think this is key to the whole thing, and that is, let's go back to when Christ first came on the scene.

Do you remember the first event that publicly introduced, identified him to the public? Even before the wedding?

Baptism of John. John chapter one, he makes it very clear, John the Baptist, who by the way, was the second cousin, of Jesus.

John makes it very clear that I may be able to identify him to Israel as the Messiah, therefore am I come baptizing.

That was the specific purpose that John had, was the introduction of Jesus in a formal way to Israel as their Messiah.

[31 : 52] Now, who was John? John was a priest. He was the tribe of Levi. John is prophesied, and Jesus who is to come after him, they are both found in the last book of the Old Testament, the book of Malachi, chapters 3 and 4, behold, I will send my messenger before your face.

That's John. That's John the Baptist, and it's going to be realized 400 years hence. And John came and introduced Jesus, Yeshua Bahamashioch as the Messiah of Israel.

And then, in connection with that, John the Baptist went on preaching, and what was John preaching?

Repent for what? For the kingdom of heaven is at hand. It's right around the corner. We're right on the edge of it, folks. That's why John was baptizing.

it was to spiritually prepare the nation to receive their Messiah. You people need to clean up your act. You need to confess your sin.

[32 : 57] You need to get right with God because the Messiah is coming. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. And you know, a lot of people bought into that message.

But who didn't? Who didn't buy into that message? the religious establishment. The chief priests, Pharisees, most of them, we know two changed their mind, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, but most of them, most of them rejected Jesus, but they began by rejecting John.

And remember the confrontation that Jesus has with them later when they ask him a question and he says, good question. I have a question for you too.

The baptism of John, was it from God or was it from man? Uh-oh. Now there's a whole crowd of people gathered around, because everywhere Jesus went he had a crowd.

Whole crowd of people gathering around. They're waiting for the Pharisees to answer that question. They had already made it quite clear that they rejected the message and the ministry of John the Baptist.

[34 : 19] This weird fanatic with wearing the funny clothes and the crazy diet that's out in the wilderness, voice crying out in the wilderness, repent. This guy is looney tunes.

And they rejected John. But what did the people do? There were thousands of people that lined the banks of the Jordan believing in John's message.

And he gathered huge crowds. And he baptized them. This was a ceremonial purification rite that the Jews were going through. This was one of many baptisms that they would experience.

And they are multiple. There's a mikvah everywhere. And the mikvah is the Jewish baptistry and it is for purification. It is for ceremonial purification.

And they went through this several times. And Hebrews 6 talks about the multitude of washings and it's called the baptism. And when John was baptizing these huge throngs of people, it was because they believed John's message.

[35 : 26] And they were so excited. You know why they were excited? They waited 4,000 years! 4,000 years from Genesis 3 about the seed of the woman that would crush the head of the serpent.

And that would be the Messiah. And John, John the Baptist is saying, folks, he's here! Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

And the people signed on. But not the religious crowd. Not the experts. They rejected.

So when Jesus confronted them with that question, tell me, the baptism of John, was that from God or was it just from man? And they looked at each other and said, excuse us a moment while we have a little discussion here.

And they had a little powwow. They got together and they said, what are we going to do? If we say that John's baptism was from man, all these people who have been baptized by John are going to hold that against us and deny that and they're going to be on his side.

[36 : 47] So we can't say that. But if we say the baptism of John, well, it was from God, then Jesus is going to say, then why didn't you accept him?

this is that question, have you stopped beating your wife? There's no good answer to that question. So they go back and they say, we don't know.

We can't tell. They plead ignorance. Like before a Senate committee when you say, I can't recall. I don't remember. You know, we don't know.

And Jesus says, hmm, you don't know. Well, I won't be answering your question either. All of this is tied together. And when they, let me ask you, let me put it this way.

Why do you suppose they were in a rejection mode of John that also followed the same rejection mode for Jesus? Why did they have a negative attitude toward John?

[37 : 54] Well, we've talked about his diet and his being out in the wilderness and he didn't graduate from their rabbinical schools, etc. But we know that according to Malachi, he was raised up of God and Zacharias recognized that in Luke chapter 1 when the angel announced that he was going to be the father of John the Baptist, remember, and he was smitten with being unable to talk.

And then when John was circumcised on the eighth day and they named him, they said, what are you going to name him? And he couldn't talk and now his tongue is loosed and everybody is saying, what are we going to call this boy?

What are we going to name? This is the eighth day of his circumcision and Zacharias' tongue is loosed and he blurts out his name, John.

Oh, and everybody looked at me. He hadn't talked in nine months. He hadn't talked all the time that Elizabeth was pregnant. and now he says his name is John. And they go, John?

We don't know anybody in the family tree who's named John, but the name came from a divine source just like thou shalt name him Jesus, for he shall.

[39 : 06] Now, what was the attitude or the position of the establishment against John the Baptist? Negative. Why was it negative?

Because they were negative against God the Father before John or Jesus ever showed up.

If you read the Old Testament, the prophets read out the religious establishment for their evil, for their hypocrisy, for their rejection, and they really prophesy against them.

This was the mode that these people were in. They were already in a position of rejection from the Father. This is why Jesus quoted the prophet Isaiah, and he said, well hath Isaiah said, we hear what you say, but your heart is far from me.

These people honor me with their lips. The religious establishment crossed all the T's, dotted all the I's, went through all the paraphernalia, all the rigmarole, all of the ritualism, dotted, they tied the mint, the cumin, and the anise, and all of that, nitpicking detail, but they ignored the greater things which were mercy and truth and justice and grace.

[40 : 45] Those things they ignored. They were already in a negative posture regarding the Father. This is what Jesus meant when he said, I think, in John chapter 14, maybe 12 to 14, all that the Father gives me shall come to me.

Now, some take that as meaning a proof text for election, the Calvinist position of election. I don't think it supports that at all. I think all Jesus was saying is, before I ever came on the scene, these people who are accepting of me were already in league with my Father.

And their embracing and accepting me and John before me was no problem at all for them because they were already on board with righteousness with my Father.

They belonged to my Father before I ever came on the scene. And now the Father gave them to me. And how is it the Father gave them to Jesus?

He had them to give. They were already on his side. And when Jesus came on the scene, he was simply providing an opportunity for the people of Israel to embrace him just as they had embraced the Father.

[42 : 14] And those who were in a right relationship with God, the Father, before Christ ever came on the scene, were those who were lining up for John's baptism and those who embraced Jesus as the Messiah God.

Because they are all of the same ball of wax. So now you've got the Father and the Son. And as Marie pointed out later, who is going to be the prime mover after the ascension?

It will be the Holy Spirit. The one whom Jesus promised would come when he goes away. I will not leave you as orphans. I will send the Spirit in my name.

And the Spirit of God came and was evident on the day of Pentecost in an extraordinary way. When the Holy Spirit came down as a result of the ten days that they were tarrying, Jesus said, you will be endued with power from on high.

Wait in Jerusalem until that comes. And when that happened, the Spirit of God came down and those who believed, guess whose side they were probably already on?

[43 : 26] The Father, the Son, it was not a quantum leap for them to move right in to embracing the Spirit of God. And for those Jews who had already rejected the Father, and had already rejected the Son, and did not sign on even after his resurrection, now they are rejecting the Spirit of God.

And I want you to turn, if you would please, to Acts chapter 7, and it is the stoning of Stephen. There is a phrase that is used there that I think is very significant.

Acts chapter 7, verse 51, and let me see what I am looking for.

Verse 51, we've got, it's a very long chapter, we'll just have to jump in somewhere. So let's go to verse 51. Stephen is delivering this blistering message that's going to cost him his life, and he says, you men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears.

Now that's a very interesting expression, you have to know something about Judaism to be able to appreciate it, but every Jew, in order to be a Jew, a male Jew, had to be circumcised on the eighth day, and it was just unthinkable for a Jewish boy not to be circumcised.

[45 : 03] And that was supposed to be a symbol, what shall we say, almost like a branding. It was an expression of that person's connection with the true God through that circumcision.

And ordinarily, it would depict a kind of obedience or allegiance with the God in whose name you had been circumcised.

And here, this phrase that is used a number of times, you are uncircumcised in heart and ears. In other words, your physical circumcision does not cut it.

No pun intended. But you have a will, you have a volition, so that you have the outward identification of connection through your circumcision, resurrection, but inwardly, as Jesus said, you're full of dead men's bones.

Remember the whited sepulchers? You really look good outwardly, but inwardly, there is rottenness of dead men's bones. And that's exactly what Stephen is accusing them of here.

[46 : 19] They are uncircumcised, their heart and ears are not dedicated to God at all. And look at what he says, you are always resisting the Holy Spirit.

They had already resisted and rejected the Father. That's why they were engaged in the detailed nitpicking that they were. And they had rejected the Son, so much so that they were instrumental in his death and his crucifixion.

And now, here, Stephen is saying, three strikes and you're out. Now, you are resisting the Holy Spirit.

Uncircumcised in heart and ears, resisting the Holy Spirit. You are doing just as your fathers did. That's the previous generations.

Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who had previously announced the coming of the righteous one, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become.

[47 : 28] So, you can read what happened to him later on. But now, I want you to go please for the time we have remaining to Colossians chapter 2. And we'll make a quantum leap because that's precisely what the scriptures do.

Colossians chapter 2. And we're talking about a concept of forgiveness. And let me just inject this. My understanding, and I'm sure that there are those who would disagree with me because there's probably a dozen different interpretations of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit or the unpardonable sin.

But my conviction personally is that that is a sin that was capable of being committed only by those Jews of that generation who witnessed the miracles that Jesus performed and refused to accept their authenticity and ascribed them to the power of Satan.

That generation has passed off the scene. And there is no generation after in a like position. Nobody else is capable of committing that sin.

And we talked today about unbelief. And you know, unbelief, refusing to believe in Jesus Christ, is not something that is unforgivable.

[48 : 53] It's very much forgivable. As long as you have a life left in you that is capable of exercising that faith and that belief. And when you do, actually, don't we all come from a position of unbelief?

Absolutely. There was a time when we were all unbelievers. But there came a crisis point in your life when you heard the gospel and made a decision to move from being an unbeliever to being a believer.

And, well, Colossians chapter 2. This is one of the most glorious verses in all of the Bible, but you will not find this kind of expansive provision made prior to the time that the Apostle Paul came on the scene and is raised up of the Spirit of God.

Let's begin with verse 8. See to it, he says, that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

For in him, Christ, all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form. And in him, you have been made complete. I can't tell you how much I appreciate that.

[50 : 15] You have been made complete. What do you lack? Nothing. Not a thing.

You have been made complete in him. And he is the head over all rule and authority. And in him, you were also circumcised, here's that word again, with a circumcision made without hands.

This is circumcision of your internal being that has nothing to do with a knife cutting the flesh. This is a spiritual circumcision.

Made without hands in the removal of the body of flesh by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with him through faith in the working of God who raised him from the dead.

And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive, spiritually alive, together with him, having forgiven us most of our transgressions except for the biggies.

[51 : 30] that is a perverted translation. Having forgiven us all transgressions, canceled out the certificate of death consisting of decrees against us, this is all law stuff, and the soul that sinneth it shall surely die, and by the law is the knowledge of sin, and we are under the curse of the law because of our sin, and Christ when he died on that cross paid for the whole nine yards, all of it.

There is nothing left to be added to that. And when any believer, when any believer wrestles or struggles with the idea that maybe there is something that they have done that is so heinous, and by the way, we're capable of some pretty nasty stuff, and there are plenty of people on record who in a shameful way tell you of some of the depths of their past and some of the degradation in which they engaged, and they gloriously were saved and redeemed by the finished work of Christ and freed from all of that, and to say that there is any sin or any combination of sins that you have committed for which you are not forgiven despite the fact that you've placed your faith and trust in Christ is to demean, depreciate, devalue the work that Christ accomplished on that cross.

It wasn't quite enough. You think you can out-sin the grace of God? Such arrogance.

most of my sins Christ is forgiven, but there are some really big ones that even he can't handle.

Such nonsense. Can you believe there are people who torture themselves, who claim to be in Christ, that place their faith and trust in Christ, and for some reason they've never been able to make the connection.

[53 : 57] They still have this guilt thing that they have to deal with. And you know, it's torturous because it is pseudo-guilt. It's false guilt.

But as I pointed out to the grief class that we conducted recently, even though people take to themselves guilt that is not necessary, guilt that is not real, guilt for which they are not responsible, even though it is pseudo-guilt, it will still do the same job on you emotionally and psychologically.

It can tear you up. And you need to be freed from that. Because Christ died to set you free, not to keep you captive to your sin or your memories or whatever.

You are free in Christ. Enjoy it. Wow. You don't find this in the Gospels. And the big reason you don't, of course, is because when Christ died on that cross, everything changed.

Everything changed. One more reference and then our time is going to be gone. 2 Corinthians chapter 5. Key passage. Every believer, every grace believer particularly, ought to have this memorized.

[55 : 25] Verse 19, 2 Corinthians chapter 5. verse 18, all these things are from God who reconciled us to himself. He didn't think about it, but he did it.

Who reconciled us to himself through Christ. And by the way, it should be pointed out, and I'm sure that this is why it's in the text, and it ought to be noted, that there is no reconciliation to God apart from Christ.

It is through Christ. And gave us the ministry of reconciliation, and that simply means that God has given us salvation and justification, not that it stopped with us, but that it flew through us, that we become purveyors of that.

Gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, this is what it's about, to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and not most of it, but the whole world, not counting their trespasses against them, and he has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

And I take this to mean that the death of Christ had the same degree of efficacy, of effectiveness, as did the sin of Adam, only in the reverse way.

[56 : 51] how many of the world's population fell in Adam? Every single one of us. Every one of us.

And how many have been raised to a newness of life in Christ because he died for the sins of the world?

Same ones. Same people. Now, what we're talking about, and I make a very careful distinction here because I've been accused of this, and sometimes it doesn't make any difference how much you deny it.

People still don't get it. We are not talking about universal salvation. We are not saying everybody is saved. We are saying that through the death of Christ, every human being ever born became and was save-able.

Big difference. Big difference between being saved or being save-able. And as in Adam, all die, even so in Christ, Romans 5, shall all be made alive.

[58 : 01] And if the all means anything, the second all ought to mean the same thing. And I think it does. So, in Adam, everyone is condemned.

And in Christ, everyone is reconciled to God. And then, what this does is it opens the door. I put it this way.

With the death of Christ, He threw the door of heaven wide open for all who will to enter in.

And He paid the price in a blanket form for the sins of everybody. And then, in verse 20, He goes on and says, Therefore, or this is why, we are ambassadors for Christ.

As though God were entreating through us, we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. This is not a contradiction. He's talking about two different groups here.

[59 : 10] He is saying the death of Christ made salvation available, but it has to be personally appropriated. It was the death of Christ that gave us a gospel to preach.

So we can go out and tell people, Christ died for your sins. What is your response to that? And when someone says, I acknowledge my sin, and I believe that Christ made the payment for my sin that I couldn't make, then you are personally reconciled to God.

Follow me? There is a personal appeal, but it is made available and possible because of the complete redemption of all humanity.

And when Christ died on that cross, he paid for the sins of everybody. Now, we have a gospel to preach and we tell people, this is why you can now, the barrier is down, you can now come to God through Jesus Christ, and personally appropriate what Christ accomplished for you.

So, thoughts or comments, anyone? Yes, Marie? I mean, back to yourself, but there are few times of forgiveness that I wanted to, what that would be, when Ruth 1, 3, 34, Jesus, said, God is forgiven for the Lord what they do.

[60 : 43] So, I had 7, 50, um, Stephen, and he kneeled around the Christ and God and Lord his Lord may not be to the charge.

And then in 2nd verse 6, Paul, he said in verse 15, 4, 15, but all men for 50, I think I may not be to the charge.

So, there was God, Stephen, and Paul all asking forgiveness for someone else. Yeah, yeah. How did that mean?

How did that forgive for him? Well, all I can say is that forgiveness, forgiveness, extending forgiveness, is an act of the will.

And, and I don't know of a better place that expresses that than in Ephesians 4. and, I don't know if I'm getting too far afield from what you're talking about or not, but forgiveness, whoever is extending it, is a willful act.

[61 : 58] In other words, you can choose whether you're going to forgive someone or not. now, the choice ought to be easy for you to make, and I base that on Ephesians chapter 4, because we have been forgiven.

In verse 30, he says, do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, which is a pretty powerful thing to think of, the fact that you can actually, you have the ability to bring grief to a member of the Trinity.

That's a pretty heavy thought. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and slander be put away from you, along with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

And you know, these are all imperatives. These are not suggestions. They are commandments. They are orders. That we are to forgive others even as we have been forgiven.

And yet, have you ever encountered anyone who said, I just could not and would not forgive him for that, because it hurt me too much.

[63 : 22] Well, we are all capable of inflicting real pain and hurt on one another. No question about that. But when we say, I do not have the desire to forgive that person, is to suggest that the manner in which they have wronged you is greater than that you have wronged Christ.

which is a pretty ridiculous concept, isn't it? But you know what? Self-centeredness can come to that kind of conclusion, that I will not forgive and I cannot forgive.

A lot of times they say I can't forgive, but what they really mean is I choose not to. I choose not to. And no one is depreciating the pain and the hurt that somebody can inflict upon others.

But you've got to look at this from a biblical perspective. And those of us who are in Christ, who have been fully, freely forgiven forever for our sins, we ought to be eager to extend forgiveness to others.

Because you know what they're doing? They're just demonstrating their humanity and their fallenness. And we've got some of our own, don't we? We're all in this thing together. So, boy, let all of this be put away from you.

[64 : 48] And be kind to one another. Someone has said, be kind to everyone you meet today because you never know what people are dealing with. Sometimes it's hard to keep that in mind, but we need to, don't we?

You want to elaborate further? Okay, thank you. Any other thoughts, anyone? Okay, thank you all for being here.

Can you believe it? This is going to be, has anybody got a calendar? The last Tuesday of June, can you believe that?

June 25? Okay, we'll be here as many as can make it and we'll look forward to getting together again. Thank you for your kind attention and thanks again to our culinary crew.