

# Matthew 12:22-50

## Christ Condemns Sins of Heart and Tongue

### 1. There is nothing too blasphemous for hardened and prejudiced men to say against religion. (vv. 22-24)

- a. The Pharisees could not deny that Christ was doing real good in the world. But they hated him because he was teaching truth that revealed their lies and threatened their power. Jn 11.48. So they tried to catch him in inconsistencies earlier in this chapter. But their attempts only gave Jesus opportunities to reveal publicly their own lies.
- b. What do you do when you can't refute the logic of your opponent *or* deny the real good he is doing, but you're still determined to destroy him? You attack his character and his motives. And what's the most damaging accusation you could imagine? To attribute someone's deeds to the Evil One, Lucifer himself. "Beelzebul, the prince of demons." Mt 9.32-34; 5.11-12.
- c. Ryle: "We must never be surprised to hear of dreadful charges being made against the best of men, without cause.... It is an old device. When the Christian's arguments cannot be answered, and the Christian's works cannot be denied, the last resource of the wicked is to try to blacken the Christian's character. If this be our lot, let us bear it patiently: having Christ and a good conscience, we may be content; false charges will not keep us out of heaven. Our character will be cleared at the last day." Mt 10.24-26; 2Tim 2.19

### 2. The impossibility of neutrality in religion. (v. 30)

- a. 1Kg 18.21; Rev 3.15-16; Lk 9.49-50. Matthew Henry: "In the little differences that may arise between the disciples of Christ among themselves, we are taught to lessen the matters in variance, and to seek peace, by accounting those who are not against us, to be with us; but in the great quarrel between Christ and the devil, no peace is to be sought, nor any such favorable construction to be made of any indifference in the matter; he that is not hearty *for* Christ, will be reckoned with as really *against* him: he that is cold in the cause, is looked upon as an enemy."

### 3. The exceeding sinfulness of sins against knowledge. (vv. 31-32)

- a. Ryle: "There are degrees in sin.... The brighter the light, the greater the guilt of him who rejects it; the clearer a man's knowledge of the nature of the gospel, the greater his sin, if he willfully refuses to repent and believe." Mt 11.20-24.
- b. Heb 6.4-6; 10.26-27. Ryle: "The unconverted children of godly parents and the unconverted members of evangelical congregations, are the hardest people on earth to impress. They seem past feeling. The same fire which melts the wax hardens the clay.... In each of these cases [Judas Iscariot, etc.] there was a combination of clear knowledge and deliberate rejection of Christ. In each there was light in the head, but hatred of truth in the heart. And the end of each seems to have been 'blackness of darkness for ever.'" Ps 19.12-14.

### 4. "The blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven." (vv. 31-32)

- a. **Who Can't Commit It:** Christians. We have been given a new heart that loves God, and all of our sins have been forgiven. Ezk 36.26-27; Jn 19.30; Rom 8.1.
- b. **What It Isn't:** It's not blaspheming against Christ. It's not angry conversations with God (Job). It's not accusing God of evil (Jonah). It's not renouncing our salvation in word only (Peter). And it's not simply speaking blasphemous words; there is no special, cursed sentence that will unsave a believer. Jn 10.27-29.
- c. **What It Is**
  - i. "The blasphemy against the Spirit" is a description of what the Pharisees did earlier in this passage. It's (1) attributing the works of God (2) to the devil (3) *with an enlightened*

*mind*. And they didn't stop there. They didn't just turn their back on the gospel, but they tried to convince those around them of the same. Mt 23.13-15.

**ii. Objection: "No sin is beyond the power of Christ to forgive."**

1. Christ graciously begins by saying "every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people." This is one of the most unequivocal statements of its kind in Scripture.
2. But God may withdraw his common, restraining grace so far that darkness may overtake a person completely; and they will harden their hearts irredeemably.
3. Mark 3.28; Heb 7.25. Christ says, "The blasphemy against the Spirit *will not* be forgiven," not, "*Cannot* be forgiven." It *will not* be forgiven because such people will not be *drawing near* to God through Christ. If they did, they *would* be forgiven, as the free offer of the gospel proclaims *all over* the Scriptures. But they won't because, like Pharaoh, they have hardened their hearts. Mt 23.37.

**d. Who Does Commit It:** Only apostates. Heb 6.4-6; 10.26-27.

**e. Comfort for Those Who Are Fearful of This Sin**

- i. First, we must indeed take this sin very seriously. The warnings in Hebrews are very strong because the danger is very grave.
- ii. If you are worried, then you most certainly have not committed this sin. If you fear losing either your salvation or the precious love of Christ, these are proofs that your soul is alive, your heart is beating, you have the Spirit within you. Only the lost are dead and have no such concern.
- iii. Do not be afraid. Remember: "Every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people." Consider Paul, Manasseh, Jonah, Peter, the Jerusalem sinners. Micah 7.18-19.
- iv. Ryle: "Do we know the truth? Then let us walk in the truth. This is the best safeguard against the unpardonable sin." Isa 55.6-9; Heb 3.12-15.

**5. The immense importance of carefulness about our daily words. (vv. 33-37)**

- a. Especially words spoken in haste or in jest. Prov 25.11; Jm 1.19-20; Eph 5.3-6. Ryle: "The lips only utter what the mind conceives." Eph 4.29; Jm 3.2; Prov 18.21; Col 4.6; Ps 39.1; 141.3.

**6. The amazing power of unbelief. (vv. 38-42)**

- a. The problem is not the lack of convincing evidence. The problem is their hard hearts. They had no will to believe. Exodus 8.15.

**7. The immense danger of a partial and imperfect religious reformation. (vv. 43-45)**

- a. What if we did believe but were just kind of lukewarm about it? Is that good enough? By no means. Consider (1) the history of the Jewish church and nation, (2) the history of the whole body of Christian churches, and (3) the history of many an individual's soul.
  - i. Ryle: "None prove so hopelessly wicked as those who after experiencing strong religious convictions have gone back again to sin and the world." Lukewarm Christians are in very great danger of apostasy. Rev 3.15, 16, 19.
  - ii. We are in danger of fulfilling this story in our own lives when we stop at putting off and do not earnestly pursue the putting on. Ryle: "It is a good thing to strive to cast sin out of our hearts; but let us take care that we also receive the grace of God in its place. Let us make sure that we not only get rid of the old tenant, the devil, but have also got dwelling in us the Holy Ghost." Rev 2.2-5; Rom 13.12-14; Eph 4.17-32; Col 3.5-17.

**8. The tender affection with which the Lord Jesus regards his true disciples. (vv. 46-50)**

- a. Christ's loves us more than he loved his own natural family while he was on earth, because of what we cost him and because he has united us to himself for all eternity.
- b. Ryle: "[Those who persecute] the near relatives of the King of kings.... will find at the last day that they have mocked those whom the Judge of all regards as his 'brother and sister and mother.'"