

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 8/19/2024

The Unforgivable Sin

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, August 20 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for children, teens, and young adults who start a new school year. Ask that GOD bless them in their studies so that they might be better equipped for life in the future. Pray that students treat each other with respect and support and encourage each other in their studies.*

One of the most difficult sayings of JESUS is in Mark 3. JESUS is confronted by the “teachers of the law.” Teachers of the law included scribes, Pharisees, rabbis, and others trained to develop, teach, and apply the law. They had come to accuse JESUS of being in league with Satan because HE cast out demons. JESUS pointed out what little sense that made because Satan would not want to stop his demons but encourage and assist them. Then JESUS confronted them with what has come to be known as the “unforgivable sin.”

JESUS said, *“Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the HOLY SPIRIT will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.”* Pretty straightforward and clear, right? Well, maybe not so much. Let’s break it down.

In the Bible, to blaspheme is to speak evil of GOD. More than this, it is to fail to give credit to GOD for GOD’s action in the world or to give the credit elsewhere when it should go to GOD. When the teachers of the law claimed that JESUS cast out demons by the power of Satan, they were blaspheming JESUS’ action done by the power of GOD. It was GOD who was casting out demons, not Satan, and to declare otherwise was unforgivable. Actually, by pointing this out to them, JESUS was giving the teachers of the law a chance to repent and receive forgiveness, but if they continued to give recognition anywhere else but GOD, they would be willfully disclaiming the work of GOD.

The Bible is clear that forgiveness comes through faith. Romans 3:22-24 perhaps spells it out best: *This righteousness is given through faith in JESUS CHRIST for all who believe...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of GOD, and all are justified freely by HIS grace through the redemption that came by CHRIST JESUS.* It is through faith in CHRIST JESUS that we receive GOD’s gracious forgiveness. And faith is a gift of the HOLY SPIRIT.

The application for us is to always be looking to see what GOD is doing and then to give GOD the credit, in other words, to praise GOD. We probably don’t go around pointing at people who are doing godly things and then proclaim that their power lies elsewhere. But we are in danger when we see the work of the HOLY SPIRIT and then try to deny its authenticity. When we see someone who has come to faith and then announce that they are not entitled to a place in GOD’s Kingdom, we are denying what the HOLY SPIRIT has done. This is what was happening in the early Christian church in Jerusalem. Word came to them that there were Gentiles who believed in JESUS, but who had not been circumcised. For the Jewish Christians, not being circumcised made these Gentiles unworthy of GOD’s grace even though they believed. A large discussion resulted in the recognition that this faith that the Gentiles had received was the work of HOLY SPIRIT and led the early church to joyfully receive these Gentiles as fellow believers in the church.

Most of us generally don’t tread near to blaspheming the HOLY SPIRIT, the unforgivable sin. But when we seek to exclude based on behavior, rather than include on the basis of faith, we are moving dangerously closer to that warning. JESUS said that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine who don’t think they need to repent. Our response whenever anyone comes in faith to be a part of our community, really GOD’s community, should be joy and celebration.

In CHRIST's love,
Pastor Jeffrey