

IN RESPONSE - THE UNPARDONABLE SIN, PART 2

by Dennis Prutow

The unpardonable sin is a single sin, quite visible to the unaided eye, committed only by professing Christians only in the context of the visible church, and involving repudiation of Christ by way of open contempt for the Holy Spirit. It is blasphemy against the Spirit. It involves showing contempt for the work of the Holy Spirit calling that work Satanic. We continue our discussion by turning to 1 John 5:16-17.

If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death.

There are those who insist John is speaking of physical death. However, all sin leads to death, physical death included. We die because we live in a sinful fallen world. All disease is incipient creeping death. If John were referring to sin which leads to physical death, all sin would be included. But John specifically says "there is a sin not leading to death." Physical death is therefore excluded as an interpretation.

John must have spiritual death, eternal damnation, in view. We may safely say that unrepentant sinners suffer this horrible fate. But John is talking about a brother. This is someone within the pale of the visible church who makes a profession of faith in Christ. We do receive all those who make profession of faith as brothers and sisters in the faith. So this is a sin committed by someone within the household of faith which leads to eternal consignment to perdition. This means the perpetrator was never born again but simply made an outward profession of faith in Christ.

In addition, this is a sin which is seen. Again, John is quite specific. "If anyone sees his brother committing a sin..." We are not talking about the Unseen Sin or the Unknown sin here. We are talking about the Unpardonable Sin. And John, in these verses, speaks of sin which is seen by members of the body of Christ. Finally, John argues against praying for the brother seen to have committed the sin leading to death. "There is a sin lead-

ing to death; I do not say that he should make request for this." It seems strange that an apostle of Christ should even suggest not praying for those committing certain sins. Could such a position in any way be responsible? Yes! If the sin is declared by Christ to be unpardonable, it would be contrary to the will of Christ to pray for the forgiveness of this sin.

I insist John 5:16-17 refers to the unpardonable sin. It is a sin committed by a professing member of the church. It is a sin which can be identified and clearly seen by other members of the church. And because it is unpardonable and leads to judgment in hell, there is cautioned not to pray for such sin.

What we have already learned from Matthew 12 fits this pattern. The sin in question is blasphemy of the Spirit. It is a sin in which someone within the church openly blasphemes the Spirit, calling the clear work of the Holy Spirit Satanic.

Before jumping to conclusions, we need to examine Hebrews 6:4-6.

For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame.

Clearly this text also has to do with a sin for which there is no repentance. "[I]t is impossible to renew them again to repentance." If the possibility of repentance is non-existent, the possibility of forgiveness. Esau found himself in a similar circumstance.

See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears (Hebrews 12:15-17).

In Hebrews 6, the person in view is a part of the fellowship of the visible

church. In the midst of this fellowship, the individual gets a taste of heaven, he or she tastes the good word of God and of the powers of the age to come. Not only so, this person partakes of the Holy Spirit in the sense that he or she experiences real conviction and illumination. Such enlightenment is described by Jesus in Matthew 13:20-21.

And the one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word, and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.

Here, although there is real joy in response to the Word of God, the faith is temporary.

In Hebrews there is "the case of those who have once been enlightened." In this latter case there is a falling away for which there is no repentance. There is a sin for which there is no forgiveness, the unpardonable sin. What is this sin? Let's consider what we have learned from the previous texts.

The sin in view is blasphemy against the Spirit. The work of the Spirit is called Satanic. This is the "falling away." This is also an open visible act of defiance. Not only so, it directly involves the body of Christ where the work of the Spirit has been experienced. Finally, it is a sin committed by a professing member of the church.

What is the sin which fits this criterion? I think this is a sin committed by a church member who turns against the work of the Holy Spirit in the bosom of the church. He walks away from the church calling the work of the Spirit he has tasted the work of Satan. Many people walk away from the church. But I have never seen someone repudiate the work of the Spirit within the body of Christ calling it Satanic. Such a sin is unpardonable. More to come.

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