

# OpenTheo

## Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (Part 2)



### **The Life and Teachings of Christ** - Steve Gregg

In this discussion, Steve Gregg talks about the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit and how it is a rejection of the message of the Spirit. He explains that rejecting the Son can be forgiven, but rejecting the Spirit cannot, and that it is a great mystery as to why. He argues that Satan is the power behind the absurdity of blaming the Holy Spirit for the work of the devil and that truth makes people free.

### **Transcript**

...that Satan is the power behind this is to resort to absolute absurdity. Kingdoms don't fight against themselves. Now, of course, there are civil wars, but that's not quite what he's saying.

A king doesn't fight against himself. His subjects may fight against other subjects. But here we're talking about a situation where they're not accusing Jesus of having a demon fighting against some other demons, but he's said to have the prince of demons, the ruler of the demons, Satan himself, Beelzebub.

By the way, Beelzebub, notice, is taken as synonymous with Satan here, because they say he did it by Beelzebub. And Jesus said, well, if Satan is doing this, implying that that's what they said, either he's saying that what is done by a demon is done by Satan, or else that Beelzebub is just another name for Satan. By the way, Beelzebub means Lord of the Flies.

It is derived from a Semitic word that goes way back in the Old Testament, the Canaanites, worshipped a god named Baal-Zeebel. Baal means Lord in the Canaanite language. And Zeebel, I must confess, I don't remember what Zeebel means, but Baal-Zeebel is the actual name of this god of the Canaanites.

And the Jews, out of contempt for this false god, changed the name of Baal-Zeebel to Baal-Zeebub, which means Lord of the Flies. Baal-Zeebel means Lord something or another. It has some meaning, but not so offensive.

The Jews, in order to demean this pagan deity, gave him a nickname, Lord of the Flies.

And that's what Beelzebub means. Now, Jesus, when he was accused of casting demons out by Beelzebub, obviously this pagan deity, in the mind of the Jews, had now come to be a term that was equated with Satan himself, the Lord of the Demons, the Prince or the Ruler of the Demons.

Jesus, whether affirming this to be true or not, took them on their own terms and said, I realize you're saying I'm doing this through Satan, but think this out a little bit. If Satan is the one offering it through me, then who is this I'm casting out? Are you willing to say that these demons I'm casting out are the good guys? And if so, then it shows what side you're on. You're on the side of the demons.

But if they are the bad guys, then how can I be a bad guy? Because I'm routing them. I'm destroying them. Now, he goes on to explain it a little more.

He says also, in verse 27, he has another argument against this accusation. If I cast out demons by Beelzebub, as they claim, by whom do your sons cast them out? They shall be your judges. Now, by whom do your sons cast them out? He points out that there were acknowledged exorcists in the Jewish community.

The Jews did not deny the possibility of exorcising demons. They actually had classes of priests, like the Catholic Church does today. Certain Jewish priests were involved in exorcism.

We know this, for example, that's given in Acts chapter 19 in Ephesus. When Paul cast out demons, a group of seven Jewish exorcists, the sons of Seba, they actually went out and tried to do the same thing he did in his way. But they are described as exorcists.

They were Jewish exorcists. So Jesus and his listeners knew very well that there were priests among the Jews who performed exorcisms. Whether they were successful or not, I don't know.

Just like I don't know how much success the Catholic priests have when they get involved in it. Or voodoo practitioners or witch doctors, they do exorcisms too. But I don't know how much of that is real success and how much of that is pretend and deception.

But Jesus was doing things that could not be mistaken. He was a blind man when the demons cast out the sea. There is no question of deception in this case.

And he said, well, you say that I'm casting out demons by Beelzebub. The only evidence you have for this is that I'm casting out demons. But you have some among yourselves, he calls them your sons, who cast out demons also.

Why don't you accuse them of casting them out by Beelzebub? And if they don't do it by Beelzebub, on what grounds can you say that I do? You see, the reason that they said that Jesus cast demons out by Beelzebub was for another reason, but that he cast

demons out. Because he did something supernatural that had to be explained. And they didn't want the natural explanation, the obvious one, that God was operating through him.

They preferred rather to suggest another alternative. But there was no grounds for that alternative in his case more than in the case of their own exorcists. And so he points out again, as he so frequently does, their own inconsistency.

Now he says in verse 28, and in this place giving the actual alternative explanation of his activity, telling what really was going on as opposed to what they claimed was going on, he says, but if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, which clearly is what he was saying it was happening, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Now, Jesus and John the Baptist had earlier announced that the kingdom was at hand, was coming, was near. Now Jesus makes it very clear, it has come.

It has come, and it has visibly come in this fact that I'm casting out demons. Now he explains more fully in verse 29, or else how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house? Now what's this got to do with the context? Well, the only way it can make sense to the context is if the strong man in question is Satan. And the strong man's house is either the world itself, because Satan is the god of this world, or possibly the person who the demon possesses, because Jesus elsewhere says at the end of this chapter when a demon goes out of a man, he goes out looking for another house, that is another person to live in.

And so the person's body is the house of the demon. Now when he says you can't go and plunder a strong man's house, I personally take it to mean the world. The world is the devil's domain, or was before Jesus came along and took it back.

But it also could refer to, of course, the body of the demon possessed is the house of the devil or of the demon. In any case, what is clear is that the house is being empty. The house is being burglarized by Jesus.

Jesus has come into the world and he's stealing things from the devil. He's taking things from the devil against the devil's will, whether it's taking the demon out of the body of the person who is possessed, or whether it's just driving Satan back on a grander scale in the world. In any case, what he was saying is this is happening, and my casting out demons is analogous to a burglar coming and robbing a man's house.

Now, granted, Satan is strong. He is like a strong man. And that should tell you something, too.

If I, Jesus, am casting out demons and plundering this strong man's house, what does that tell you about Satan? Certainly you know from a natural analogy that if you wish to

plunder a strong man's house, you'd have to subdue him. You'd have to render him immobile. You'd have to somehow reduce him to the incapability of resistance.

Jesus is the figure of binding him, in this case. And binding is one way to do that. You could bind the strong man, but the same thing could be true if you locked him in a closet, or knocked him out, or did something else to him.

The whole point is you've got to render him incapable of resistance before you go through his drawers. Because he's not going to let you, he's not going to stand by and let you do that unless you've somehow immobilized him. Now, what he is saying, quite obviously, is this.

Not only am I not operating through the power of Satan, I have removed his power. I have overcome his power. I am plundering his house.

I am able to deduce. I have rendered him incapable of resisting me. I have bound him.

Or else how could I be spoiling his house, as you see me doing? Now, two things in verses 28 and 29 I'd like to point out. Jesus knows that he can declare invisible realities to be true, but that the skeptic is at liberty to doubt things that he cannot see. So he appeals to two invisible realities in these two verses that is to say, if you can see that such and such is happening, you can deduce that so and so is also true.

The first thing is, if I'm casting out demons by the Spirit of God, which everyone could see is what he was doing, then he says the kingdom of God has overtaken you. That you can deduce that the kingdom of God has come, though you haven't noticed it, you haven't seen it. It's invisible, it's spiritual, but you can come to that conclusion by what you can see.

You can see me casting out demons, therefore you can deduce that the kingdom has come. Likewise, you can see me plundering the devil's house, therefore you can deduce that the devil has been bound. You can deduce that what I have done to the devil upon entering his domain is stripped him of his power.

Now, I wish I had written down, I might be able to find it here in a cross-reference. I would like to very much show you Luke's version of this statement. You might know where it is, I think it's in Luke 11 if I'm not mistaken.

Let's try Luke maybe 11, 29. I should have looked this up beforehand, but I looked up a lot of things, I was in a hurry though. Luke 11, I think, is where I want to go.

Is it? Verse 17? Okay, yeah, yeah, let's see here. Verse 21 is actually, I mean it does start in 17, but verse 21 and 22. Here's the same statement as it's rendered in Luke.

Luke 11, 21. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in

peace. But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoils.

Now, the context of this statement is very clearly the same as that in Matthew 12. Here he describes Satan as a strong man, fully armed, before Jesus came, guarding his own palace, which would be the world or whatever he controls, and his goods are in peace. That is, the devil is undisturbed until one stronger comes.

He says, when a stronger one comes, clearly Jesus himself, the first thing he does, he takes away all of his armor. And then, he divides the spoils. He disarms the guy.

Now, the disarming of Satan is spoken of also in Colossians chapter 1. Excuse me, Colossians chapter 2. Please turn there. Colossians chapter 2 is speaking of what Jesus accomplished in his life and death, and principally in this place, focusing on his death. It says in verse 15, having disarmed principalities and powers, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it, that is, in the cross, or in some manuscripts say, in himself.

Now, principalities and powers in this case clearly refers to the demonic powers. These are who we wrestle against according to Ephesians chapter 6. We wrestle against these principalities and powers. But Jesus has disarmed them.

It is rather encouraging to know that if you have to wrestle someone, that person has been disarmed. That does not mean it is a piece of cake, but it means that that person no longer has the advantage. That person is vulnerable to you.

If you resist the devil, he will flee from you, not vice versa. But the fact is, it says that Jesus disarmed principalities and powers. Now, I would remind you that that is the term that Jesus used in Luke's version that we are considering.

A stronger one comes and takes away the armor of the strong man, of Satan. But that is the same thing that Matthew rendered as binding the strong man. So, how are we to understand the binding of Satan? It is the removal of his armor.

It is the disarming of Satan. And we are told quite plainly in the Colossians passage that this happened at the cross. It actually began to happen before the cross.

Jesus indicated that he had already accomplished a fair amount of this at the time that he was being criticized. He had already reduced Satan to incapacity to resist, but the final nail on the coffin, as it were, was at the cross and the resurrection. Now, what I want you to note is that the disarming of Satan is parallel to the binding of Satan.

And when did that happen? It happened at the cross. Look at Hebrews chapter 2. I realize I have talked about these verses before, but the fact of the matter is that when you leave this school, you are going to hear all kinds of contrary things. And so I want to

make sure that you remember and know what the Bible says on some points.

In Hebrews chapter 2, verse 14 and 15, especially verse 14, inasmuch then as the children of God have partaken of flesh and blood, they are human, he himself likewise shared in the same, that is, he became a human, so that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. Now, through Jesus' death, it says he destroyed him who had the power of death. But the word destroy is an unfortunate translation.

It is not quite right. The Greek word is *katargeo*, and it literally means reduced to inactivity. Now, obviously Satan is not reduced to inactivity in every respect, even at this time.

Nor was it true when Paul or the writer of Hebrews wrote this. But if something was true, obviously the writer of Hebrews has something in mind, some reduction in Satan's activity was accomplished at the cross. Not reduction in all forms of activity, but this is no doubt parallel to what Colossians said, that Satan was disarmed.

Or as Matthew puts it, he was bound. He was reduced in activity to the extent that he was no longer able to resist successfully the kingdom of God. If I'm casting out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come, and I have invaded his turf.

And I have bound him, I've taken away his army, I've reduced him to inactivity. Not in all respects, but at least in some significant ones. Now, of course, the main reason I go through all of this is because of the very controversial passage in Revelation 20, which is another place that talks about the binding of Satan.

This is a very controversial passage, there are many different opinions about it. But I'll just point out that the beginning of the chapter 20 of Revelation is all about the binding of Satan. I saw an angel coming down from heaven, aiming the key to the bottomless pit, a great chain in his hand.

He laid hold on the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. Cast him in the bottomless pit, and so forth. I used to believe this was something that was going to happen when Jesus comes back.

But I personally believe at this time that we are just here seeing a graphic pictorial description of what is stated in sentences in these other places. That Jesus, when he came to this planet, bound that dragon for an extended period of time. There is a time predicted when he will be loosed again from his prison for a little while, and then comes the end.

But the fact is, the binding of Satan in this place, I think is most reasonably equated with the binding of Satan in other places in the Bible. Rather than a second binding or another, you know, what happened to the first one? If Satan got bound when Jesus was

here, why does he have to be bound again when Jesus comes back? Who let him go? It seems obvious that if Jesus bound the devil at his first coming, the devil has not gotten free yet unless God has released him. Now, in this passage in Revelation 20, an agent of God binds the dragon, throws him into the pit for a period of time, and then an angel comes and lets him out again.

But that's what it would take, of course. It would take a messenger of God of equal stature to Jesus to release him. Of course, there is no angel of equal stature to Jesus himself, if we don't know who to release him.

But what I'm saying is, Revelation 20 best is understood, I think, in light of these statements of Jesus and of Paul and of the writer of Hebrews, about what Jesus accomplished the first time he was here, not the second time, the first time in binding the devil. Now, what he's saying is that he's able to cast out demons because he has bound the strong man. Let me just respond a little bit to a common charismatic practice these days.

Many charismatics, realizing, of course, that this is talking about the binding of Satan, but not realizing that Jesus bound Satan and that he's claiming that he did so, they sometimes say that what Jesus teaches here is that if we're going to successfully do the spiritual effort, we're going to have to bind the devil. Because you don't go into a strong man's house without binding him first. And I've often heard this stated in missionary enterprise and so forth, we want to go into this country, we want to go into this city, we want to plunder it, so we'd better bind the devil.

Because Jesus said you've got to bind the strong man first. I think this misses the point. Jesus is saying that the strong man is bound.

He already did it. We don't have to bind the strong man, the strong man is bound. Jesus did it and he hasn't been let loose yet.

We just do the plundering, just like Jesus did. Casting out demons, it's interesting. Jesus did not interpret his ministry of casting out demons as a spiritual warfare.

He interpreted it as the grabbing the spoils of a warfare that's already won. He's already beat the enemy, now he's just going in and collecting the goods. It is a warfare seen a certain way, but you know what the whole thing is? The whole issue in spiritual warfare right now is not wrestling down the demons because they're strong and we have to meet them with equal strength.

The whole strength of the powers of darkness is in deception. The whole strength of the devil is that he's a liar. If you get a person's mind, you've got their loyalty.

The way to get them is through lying. Tell them convincing lies. The devil convinces people that God's a bad guy and that Jesus isn't real and that the Bible's not true and

that you're doomed to be a sinner.

There's no escape and all kinds of lies. As long as the devil can get people to believe those things, people will serve him even though he's a jerk and he's got no authority. So what the Christian's warfare is, is bringing the truth.

Take the sword of the spirit which is the word of God, having the belt of truth around your waist and you carry the truth through the word of God to those who don't know the truth. I saw a movie years ago, it's an old Walt Disney movie. I forget what it was called, but these people were in an airplane and their instruments got whacked out and they got off course and they ran out of fuel out in the middle of the ocean.

They had this amphibious plane and they fortunately saw an island, an uncharted island out there and they were able to land near it or on it. There they found a couple of aged Japanese generals. This was supposed to have taken place in 1970 or 1980, something like that.

But no one had told these generals that the war was over. They thought World War II was still happening. No one had alerted them that the war was over.

So when these Americans landed, these generals captured them. They said, ah, we caught some American prisoners. The emperor will be proud of us or whatever.

And it was their sad plight to learn that they didn't catch any prisoners. The prisoners they caught actually were the victors. The war was over.

These generals didn't have any authority to capture them. Now, if the Americans had not heard that the war was over, then they would have lived as the prisoners of these generals. Because they wouldn't have known the war was over either.

They would have thought, yeah, I guess we have been captured. Everybody has got us here. But knowing the truth set them free.

You know, the truth makes you free. People don't know that the devil has lost. People don't know that Jesus has won, that all authority in heaven and earth has already been given to him.

He already rules. He is the king over all kings, lord over all lords. But if they can be kept in ignorance of that, they can be kept subject to the devil and to his demons.

Therefore, the function of spiritual warfare is to inform those who are deceived by the devil of the truth. And to let them know, hey, Jesus is lord. Jesus has conquered the devil.

You don't have to serve him anymore. A book called *Eternity in Their Hearts* by Don Richardson, I think, catalogs a number of really fascinating cases where missionaries entered tribal areas. Most of the examples he gives are in China, but he gives some from



Latin America and other places, India too.

But a lot of tribal peoples, when they were first approached by Christian missionaries, were in the habit of worshiping idols. But when they were approached with the gospel, they said, we know this story. We know this god you're talking about.

And when asked, well, why in the world don't you worship him? Why do you worship these demons and so forth? They said, well, we knew that the real god is out there, but we were afraid these demons would punish us if we worshiped the real god. So we placated them by worshiping their idols. And the message they needed to hear was, hey, you don't have to worry about them.

They're disabled. They're disarmed. You don't have to worry about serving God.

You can do that. You don't have to worry that the demons are going to beat you up. They don't have any power.

They're disarmed. They have no right to claim your loyalty. And that's essentially what the gospel of the kingdom is.

Jesus said, the kingdom of God has come unto you. And the evidence of it is demons flee in every which direction. Because if I'm plundering the strongman's house, then the strongman has been reduced and bound and disarmed.

And therefore, I think the task of the church is just a mop-up operation, going and continuing the plunder until everybody has been alerted, until everybody has been brought out of darkness and out of deception. At least everyone who will. Some won't.

Some people hear the truth and don't want it. But the point is, some will. And that's what we're involved in.

Spiritual warfare is very little more than evangelism. I realize that we Charismatics are all fond of talking about techniques and methods of spiritual warfare and stuff. And there's something very romantic and flattering about speaking of ourselves as great mighty warriors and thinking about what a mighty army we are and how we've got all this armor and stuff.

But all that armor is metaphorical. When Paul says we have the sword and the spear, he's just talking about the word. He's not talking about some kind of a steel weapon.

And when he talks about the helmet of salvation and the breastplate of righteousness, he's just talking about Christian realities that we already knew about, just using a military metaphor for it. I already knew about salvation. I already knew about righteousness.

I already knew about truth. I already knew about the Word of God. But he's just now kind

of describing it in a martial metaphor.

But the fact of the matter is, there is a warfare. But the warfare is not anywhere near as mystical and spooky and scary as some people make it out. Sure, there's demons out there, but they've already lost.

And they know it. It's just that you don't know it. And you need to know it.

And you need to know it so you won't be afraid of it. You don't tremble. They tremble.

The demons believe and tremble. You don't run away from them. You resist the devil.

He runs from you. That's what the Bible says. And yet, sometimes there's such a glamour and such a romanticism about spiritual warfare.

There's such a heroism, as long as we make the battle seem awfully dangerous and awfully pitched and awfully terrible. That way we're somewhat more heroic if we win. But the fact of the matter is, the hero already won.

Two thousand years ago, we're just there to mop up. The demons are terrified that we'll find this out. Because they know it.

And their only hope is that we won't know it and that others won't. So, the whole power of the devil is in deception and sneaking around behind the curtain and stuff. And if you just pull the curtain and shine the light of truth on him, there's not much you can do about it.

Well, you say, but don't people get killed? Yeah, they get killed, but that's not losing. That's winning. Martyrdom is the ultimate promotion.

So, that's not scary. It shouldn't be, anyway. Verse 30, Jesus said, And he who is not with me is against me.

Matthew 12, verse 30. And he who does not gather with me scatters abroad. Well, I don't know that that needs much explanation.

He's basically saying there's a line. On one side of it is loyalty to the kingdom of God. On the other side is loyalty to the kingdom of darkness.

Do you want to be loyal to the loser or loyal to the winner? I've bound the strong man. I've demonstrated that he's bound by plundering his house right before your eyes. The kingdom has come.

Do you want to step over the line into loyalty to me? If not, well, you've got to realize they're not a neutral place. It's not as if there's the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness, and then there's no man's land somewhere between the two that's been

decided over. The valley of decision or something.

The fact of the matter is, he's saying, you guys who are criticizing me, you guys who are saying that I'm on the devil's side, you're the ones who are on the devil's side. You're not with me. Therefore, you're not neutral observers.

You're against me. And I'm the one who's against the devil, so who does that make you for? You're of your father, the devil. He doesn't say that here.

He tells the same people that in John 8, verse 44. So he's basically saying there's really only two sides. Now, some people have been concerned.

They thought they saw a contradiction. Elsewhere, I think it's in the ninth chapter of Luke, James and John come to Jesus and say, we saw a man casting out demons who doesn't hang out with us, and so we forbade him to do it. And Jesus said, don't forbid him.

Nobody can cast out demons in my name and then lightly turn around and speak evil of us. And he says, he that is not against us is with us or is on our side. Let me go ahead and give you that.

Why not? Luke 9, 49, 50. When John answered and said, Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow with us. Jesus said to him, do not forbid him.

He who is not against us is for us. Now, some people think that there's a contradiction there. Jesus said, he's not against us, he's for us, but he said, whoever is not for us is against us.

Well, why would that be a problem? If there's only two positions, then that's no problem. It's quite obvious. You're either for Jesus, in which case you're against the devil, or you're for the devil and you're against Jesus.

A person who's not against us is on the side that's for us. A person who's not for us is necessarily on the side that's against us. It's just two ways of saying the same thing.

Some people have found a problem with that. I've never seen that as problematic. Now, we come to something that really is a problem.

And we have five minutes to cover the most difficult problem in the Gospels, which, as you know, I'm not very good at that. That is doing anything in five minutes. Verse 31, Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven men.

Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him. Whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age

to come. Now, of course, the big question is, what is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit? The paragraph title in my Bible says the unpardonable sin, but that is not actually in the text.

There's no place in the Bible that uses the term unpardonable sin. That's what this passage has come to be called, but it's not there. It doesn't say it's unpardonable.

It says a person who does this does not have forgiveness. What is it, though? What is this thing? It's called the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. There's a number of theories on this.

One of them is that this was just something these few men did. These ones who said that Jesus had a demon, they committed blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, and therefore he was just making sort of a sovereign declaration that they were lost and they'll never be forgiven. No one else has ever done this because, first of all, no one else has ever since then has seen Jesus with their eyes and made this kind of statement to him and so forth.

Frankly, I don't think that's a very sensible explanation of it. He's speaking more generically. He's talking about men, generally speaking.

The most popular view among, it seems like most denominations I'm aware of, is that, and I don't agree with it, is that the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is simply their failure to accept Christ. The argument goes like this. No one can come to Christ except the Holy Spirit convicts them and draws them to Christ.

Of course, the Holy Spirit attempts to do this many times during a person's life, but every time the Holy Spirit convicts you and you don't repent, you're flying in the face of the Holy Spirit. You're resisting the Holy Spirit, as it were. A person who continues to do this all their life, they will have no salvation.

They'll have no forgiveness in this life or in the next. Now, to me, that's kind of not a very sensible way of understanding this. For one thing, all it would be saying is, if you don't get saved, you won't be saved.

I mean, it's kind of a tautology. It's kind of an obvious thing. If you never get saved, never get saved, is what it would be saying.

It doesn't suggest that there's any particular thing that Jesus has in mind at all. It's just being human and neglecting to become a Christian is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Well, I would say this.

The evidence of the passage itself is against this interpretation because he specifically says anyone who speaks a word against... Now, speaking a word is a specific action. There are many people who never received Christ and by these people's understanding of this had committed therefore the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, but they would never have spoken a word against Christ. Some of them never even heard about Christ.

And many of the ones who have, have never spoken anything dishonorable toward him. And therefore, they're basically saying what Jesus said about this matter is irrelevant. When he said speak a word, it didn't mean anything.

Blasphemy doesn't mean anything. The word blasphemy means rail on or to speak insultingly of. And to put down, verbally to put down something, someone.

In this case, the Holy Spirit. Now, there is a specific action that Jesus is referring to. It has to do with speaking.

And I would point out to you that verses 33 through 37 are also about speaking. It talks about trees and fruit and so forth, but the tree and the fruit illustration there, the fruit involved is the words that comes out of a man's mouth. He says either make a tree good and it's fruit good or else make the tree bad and it's fruit bad.

For a tree is known by its fruit. Fruit of vipers, how can you being evil, that is evil trees, speak good things? That is produce good fruit. He's saying good trees produce good fruit.

You are evil people, therefore you're evil trees. How could you speak good things? That would be to produce good fruit. Good trees don't do that.

The fruit here in this discussion is what you speak. It comes out of your heart. Just like the fruit that's produced from a tree comes out of the very nature of the tree itself.

So the words that come out of your mouth come out of your nature, out of what's in your heart. And he says that of course also in verse 34, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. And he amplifies that in the remaining verses.

He says in verse 36, I say to you, I'm going to talk more about the so called unpardonable sin in a moment. He says in verse 36, I say to you, that for every idle word men may speak, they will give an account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned.

This context certainly suggests that when he talks about speaking a word against the Son of Man and speaking a word against the Holy Spirit, he's actually talking about speaking words. But he also is elaborating that saying it's not so much the words that are the problem. It's why the words are there.

Where are those words coming from? Bad words come out of bad hearts. Bad fruit comes off of bad trees. If you blaspheme the Holy Spirit, that's a bad word.

But the reason you do it is because you have a bad heart. Now, it's quite interesting that he says blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is something for which people are not forgiven. They have no forgiveness.

But he goes on immediately to explain why. You're going to be judged by your words. The words you speak are the only way that you can rightfully be judged because they are the true barometer of what's in your heart.

Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth spills out and speaks. In Proverbs chapter 4, I think it's verse 23, with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life, or the streams or the fountains of life. They come out of your heart.

Jesus said elsewhere that it's not what goes into a man's mouth that deposits, but what comes out of his mouth comes from his heart, he said. And so, Jesus, whatever he said about the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, although it's true he does speak about saying something, it's quite clear his focus is on the heart. Whatever it is that puts a person in a position to not be forgiven, it may result in a word, but it starts in the heart.

And I want to say that's very important because many people, tender-hearted people, people who love the Lord, sometimes wonder, I wonder if I've ever said a word against the Holy Spirit. I wonder if I've ever committed that blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. If so, then my whole salvation experience is just an illusion.

I'm not really saved at all. I can't be forgiven. And I've had many people express concern about that.

And what you need to understand is Jesus is not talking about somebody who accidentally frames the wrong syllables together and finds out it was the magic word that puts you in the category of unforgivable for the rest of all eternity. It is the verbal expression of what's in an evil heart. That is the crime here.

But what is the thing? Well, one of the things that makes the passage curious and difficult is he makes a distinction between those who speak a word against the Son of Man, on the one hand, and those who speak a word against the Holy Spirit. Now that is strange. I mean, that's real strange because Jesus frequently says that what he does and what the Holy Spirit does are essentially linked.

In fact, he has just said that. He said, if I'm casting out demons by the Spirit of God, in verse 28, a few verses back here, then the King of God is coming. So he links his work almost inseparably from that of the Spirit, which is a great mystery.

And I don't know that I can solve the problem, but I'll tell you one possibility that occurs to me. It may not appeal to you, in which case you can reject it. It has been said by those who are not dispensationalists, and by the way, dispensationalists see seven dispensations, but those who are not dispensationalists usually see three dispensations.

And I would have to put myself in that class of persons. There is the Old Testament period, which was when Jesus was on earth, Jesus and John's ministry. It was neither fish nor fowl.

There was some abiding acknowledgement of the law in the life of Jesus and John, but there was also sort of a falling away of legal things. He did away with the dietary laws. There was this transitional period here.

It's been described sometimes as this way, that the Old Testament was the dispensation of the Father, the lifetime of Christ was the dispensation of the Son, the life of Christ. Now, don't let the word dispensation throw you off. It just means a period of time in this case.

And I think that's valid. I think that when Jesus appeared, something changed, but it changed more radically and more completely when he died and left. I mean, it's like when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, something new again began.

Remember at the Upper Room, Jesus said, and something new happened then, I think. Now, I'm not sure where you draw the line. It's even like when you say, when was Satan bound? Well, it says in one place at the cross, but Jesus was talking like he'd already bound him before the cross.

That whole lifetime of Jesus was a transitional thing. It was sort of a dispensation all of its own, followed by the more permanent situation where the Holy Spirit Now, if you say, as many have, and I don't have any objection to doing so, that the Old Testament was the dispensation of the Father, the life of Christ on earth was the dispensation of the Son, and the Church Age ever since has been the dispensation of the Spirit, then there is a possibility that what he's saying is, during this, as it were, dispensation of the Son, while the Son is here with you, you may say all kinds of things against what I have to say, and yet be forgiven. After all, on the cross he said, Father, forgive them.

Apparently suggesting that all those things that had been done against him during his lifetime were forgivable. But, what about those things that were done in the Age of the Spirit? Well, I'm not sure about this, but look at the parallel in Luke. I wish we had more time to look at it carefully, but in Luke chapter 12, verses 8 through 10, notice the context in this case.

It says, Also I say to you, whoever confesses me before men, him the Son of Man will confess before the angels of God, but he who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him, but him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven. Now, this is in the context of Jesus telling the disciples about their ministry after he's gone.

They're going to go out and preach the gospel and so forth, and people who acknowledge the gospel will be saved and so forth. But, he talks about those who blaspheme the Holy Spirit in the context of the disciples' later ministry. Jesus said elsewhere, well, I think it's even, where is it here? Well, it's in the very next verses.

Verse 11, Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say. Now, here's what I'd like to suggest to you as a possibility. It may not be the right one.

There's a lot of choices. But, a possibility is this, that Jesus is saying, when I'm gone, you guys are going to be my preachers. The Holy Spirit will speak through you.

If people speak against me at this time while I'm here, well, there's hope for them still. But, when they reject the witness of the Holy Spirit through you guys, that's their last chance. There's no hope if they reject that.

If they speak evil of that, if their heart is rejected of that, then that's all there is. You know, there's nothing more. The age of the Son is a time where even if people reject and speak evil of the Gospel, it's not the last chance.

But, the age of the Holy Spirit, if they speak evil against the Holy Spirit's message through the testimony of the Church and basically continue to do so, well, they are using up their last opportunity. If they reject the message of the Spirit through the Church as they are currently rejecting through the Son in His early presence, that'll be all there is. There's no hope for them.

There isn't going to be a fourth age after that, you know, where they can maybe get forgiveness. They'll have no forgiveness in this age or in the age to come. That's, that may be a little strange interpretation to some of you and there is, of course, a fourth interpretation that is very common and that is to say that the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is simply to attribute to the devil the work of the Holy Spirit.

And that is usually argued on the basis that that's essentially what the Pharisees did in the context of Jesus' statement in Matthew and Mark that they had said that He was doing the works of Beelzebub and Jesus said it was the work of the Holy Spirit so essentially they had done something tantamount to saying that the work of the Holy Spirit was the work of the devil and that the Holy Spirit was therefore the devil. Therefore, they had called the Holy Spirit the devil. Now, this is a possible understanding but it still doesn't in any sense explain why it would be less tolerable to do that than, for instance, to call Jesus the devil.

Now, I mean, why is it okay or why is it forgivable to speak a word against the Son but not against the Spirit? That's a very, very great mystery and it's not easy to answer. But there'd certainly be no explanation of why it would be unforgivably offensive to call the work of the Holy Spirit the devil but not to do the same toward Jesus. Now, why wouldn't that be so offensive? I think it more has to do with the duration of their resistance.

Evil words against the Gospel are coming from an evil, rebellious heart against the



Gospel. During the ministry of Jesus, people who rejected him during his entire lifetime, they had not exhausted all their chances. They could still be forgiven if they repented.

But, in the age of the Spirit, when the Spirit is testifying the same message through the Church, if the people persist in their rebellion against that and speaking against that and so forth, then, of course, they have exhausted all their options and there is no place of forgiveness for them. It is not, therefore, to say that a single statement uttered once accidentally dooms a person to being unpardonable but rather that a heart of rebellion against God from which evil words proceed like blasphemies against the Holy Spirit or even blasphemies against Jesus come from the same kind of heart. The thing is that Jesus was going to go away and there would still be a chance for repentance beyond that.

When the Church goes away, when the Holy Spirit goes away, there won't be any chance for repentance beyond that. I believe that the Bible teaches there is no sin which, if repented of, will not be forgiven. Too many negatives in that sentence.

I want to turn that around and say it positively. I believe that any sin that a person repents of, they will be forgiven. In 1 John, it says, if we confess our sins, it is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

It also says, if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin. All sin can be forgiven if it is repented of. But the problem is, those who blaspheme the Holy Spirit in the sense that Jesus is talking about, are people who are persisting in a heart that doesn't want to repent.

They have evil hearts, rebellious hearts, they are worried but sins only show what's in their hearts. It's their heart condition, not what comes out of their mouth principally that renders them lost and doomed. Their hearts are not disposed to repent.

It's not that they did the ultimate faux pas in saying a certain word and then, oops, even if you repent of that one, you can't be forgiven. That was just the word that God doesn't want to hear. It's not that.

And that's how some people understand it. It's rather that a person who is persistently rebellious against God, the Holy Spirit, whether he's speaking through Jesus or through the church, eventually, he thinks he's going to, you know, he's not disposed to repent. And because his heart is hardened against truth, he, you know, so hardened in fact that he doesn't even mind speaking against God.

Even sometimes they even say that the work of God is the work of the devil. That such is a heart that will never know forgiveness only because it will never know repentance. Anyone who repents can be saved.

But, some people won't repent. And some people it's because their hearts are so hardened and so rebellious against God. They simply don't have it in their hearts that they don't have any inclination whatsoever to repent.

And therefore, they'll never be forgiven. That is how I understand the difficult passage. It could be that somebody understands it better than I do.

I'm doomed to give only the views that I understand. And I can't do better than that. But, we'll go on to other things next time.

Rest assured, you haven't committed the unpardonable sin. At least not yet. So, God bless you.