

“The Gospel’s In The Unpardonable Sin”

Matthew 12:30-32

August 16, 2026

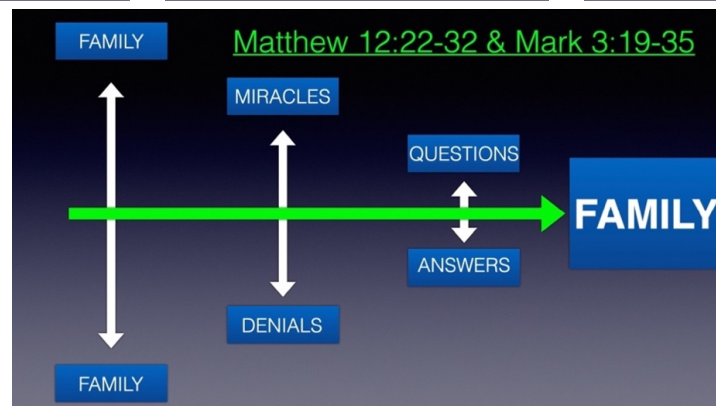
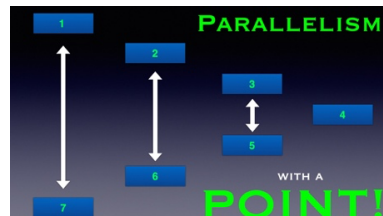
INTRO: *What’s the **worst object evil, sin, or news...**
you’ve ever seen, heard, received, or imagined?*

PRAYER

CONTEXT:

- We’re in God’s Word & Matthew’s N.T. Gospel...
- We’re walking with Jesus The Christ... early on.
- We’re focused on His shocking walk & warfare.
- We’re in another treasure trove of truth in love!

FAITH DEFINES FAMILY!
&
Final-faith-families
will be together **forever**
in either **heaven** or **hell**!



BIG IDEA: The Gospel
is in the unpardonable sin.

PREVIEW:

1. The **TRUE** News
2. The **BAD** News
3. The **WORST** News
4. The **GOOD** News
5. The **BEST** News

TEXT: Matthew 12:30-32

*MT He who is not with Me is against Me,
and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.*

*“Therefore, MK assuredly/amen, MT I say to you, every sin MK
will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies
they may utter; but **he who blasphemes against the Holy
Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal
condemnation.** MT Anyone who speaks a word against the Son
of Man, it will be forgiven him; but **whoever speaks against
the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him**, either in this age
or in the age to come” — MK because they said, “He has an
unclean spirit.”*

I. The **TRUE** News

A. The WORD of God

- a. 2nd Timothy 3:16
- b. John 1:1ff
- c. Matthew's Gospel

B. The WILL of God

a. Gospel *Glory*

- i. *"Behold! The Lamb of God..."*
- ii. *"Repent! For the kingdom... is at hand."*
- iii. *"I have come to fulfill the Law..."*

b. Gospel *Grace*

- i. *"Come to Me... I will give you (soul) rest."*
- ii. *"...many followed...& He healed them all."*
- iii. *"Blessed are the..." embodied beatitudes!*

c. Gospel *Growth*

(Know, Grow, Go!)

- i. Matthew ch.5-7 *(Learn, Love, Live)*
- ii. Matthew 10:16 *(HE... See. BE!)*
- iii. Matthew 28:18-20 *(Head, Heart, Hands)*

C. The WAY of God

- a. Initiating
- b. Inviting
- c. Investing
- d. Informing
- e. Inspecting
- f. Inspiring
- g. Impacting

II. The **BAD** News

A. **SIN** is **bad news!** (Romans 3:23 & 6:23)

B. Sin is **defined...**

i. Missing the mark... of God's Word, will, & way

ii. ANY displeasing of God.

1. Don't underestimate this definition

2. Study the sins of **Revelation ch.2-3**

3. See sin's progressive nature in life...

4. See sin's "seeds"- doubt & unbelief.

5. See sin's "doorman" – temptation.

iii. ALL faith-less fruit! (Romans 14:23)

C. Sin is **defining...** (Romans 1:18-25 & John 3:36)

D. Sin is **active & strategic...**(Genesis 3:1ff & 1st Peter 5:8)

E. Sin is **NEVER neutral** (Matt 7:13-14, 15; 21-23; 24-27)

a. There is NO "middle road!"

b. **There ARE real enemies!**

c. Jesus will shock most!

d. **"Looks" don't last!**

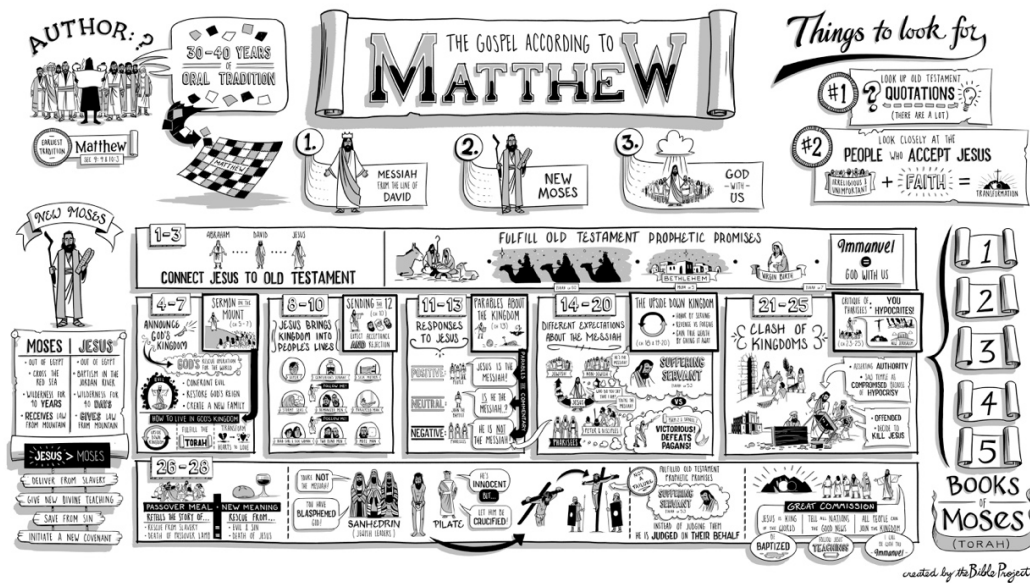
e. Sand won't stand!

There is NO NEUTRAL in The kingdom of God!

*MT He who is not with Me is against Me,
and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.*

III. The **WORST** News

A. Remember: we are in the heart of God's Word.



B. There is a sin for which there is **NO CURE!**

C. Hold that thought... & remember our context...

D. Before we dig in, **BEWARE** any “point fetishes!”



E. Learn the principle of ***“Mountains & Molehills.”***

- a. **Remember:** Context is essential for exegesis!
- b. *ALWAYS* keep *“truth in love”* in/the biblical context.
- c. *ALWAYS* keep *“Jesus is Lord”* in/the biblical context.
- d. *ALWAYS* keep *His Great C’s* in/the biblical context.
- e. *ALWAYS* keep *“My witnesses”* in/the biblical context
- f. *ALWAYS* keep *“God’s glory”* in/the biblical context.
- g. ALWAYS keep *His main missional thing the main thing!*
- h. ALWAYS keep *His minor things... our minor things.*
- i. **NEVER** make *“mountains”* out of God’s *“molehills.”*
- j. **NEVER** make *“molehills”* out of God’s *“mountains.”*

F. NOW HEAR THE WORD(S) OF ALMIGHTY GOD.

he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit
NEVER HAS FORGIVENESS, but is subject to
ETERNAL CONDEMNATION. MT *...whoever speaks against*
*the Holy Spirit, it **WILL NOT BE FORGIVEN** him,*
*either **IN THIS AGE OR IN THE AGE TO COME**”*

➤ Let me point out something critically important from the start...

- **Bad news buys US ALL a ticket into hell!**
- Remember **Romans 3:23/6:23**
- It’s not only the “worst” sin/sinners to go...
- **EVERYONE** is born into bad news by default.
- *Everyone in hell will have these same results.*
- Hypocrites should humbly hear & heed this!

➤ Still, ***this*** news is ***really beyond really bad news***.

Understanding the context & content here
is critical for us to righteously, biblically,
missionally, & personally understand
the consequences & purposes
of this passage...

G. Let's unpack what Jesus said... & did not say...

- a. There is an eternal place of torment (hell).
- b. Most (all but a "few") will end up there.
- c. Some will be SHOCKED upon arrival there.
- d. The Gospel's invitation is global & universal.
- e. ***BUT Gospel-application is by grace & faith.***
- f. Blaspheming is a really bad sin...
- g. Blaspheming the Father & the Son is BAD!
- h. ***Blaspheming the Holy Spirit is different...***
- i. All other sins & blasphemy can be forgiven.
- j. Blaspheming The Spirit is unforgiveable!

VIDEO: *Southern Seminary's*

"Honest Answers #1"

Dr. Daniel Stevens

H. NOW... let's dig into what The Word is telling us!

a. First, **this is NOT an isolated text or truth**

i. **Mark 3**

ii. **1st John 5**

iii. **Romans 1:18-25**

iv. **Hebrews 6 & 10**

The unpardonable sin (aka “the point of no return”) is putting Jesus The Christ in bed with Beelzebub... making bedfellows of the Devil and the Divine.

The unpardonable sin, per MacArthur, WAS, attributing to Satan the work of the Holy Spirit. But TODAY, the unpardonable sin is the opposite... it is attributing to the Holy Spirit, the work of Satan!”

Even more, “the charismatic movement has stolen The Holy Spirit & made a golden calf... Now they are dancing around their golden calf as if it were The Holy Spirit.”

IV. The **GOOD** News

MK assuredly/amen, MT I say to you, every sin MK will be forgiven the sons of men, & whatever blasphemies they may utter... MT Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him;

A. The Gospel of Jesus Christ IS "The Good News."

a. **John 3:16**

- i. Sovereign GRACE...
- ii. Human RESPONSIBILITY...
- iii. Gospel truth, love, faith, repentance

b. **1st John 1:9**

*"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just
and will forgive us our sins and purify us
from all unrighteousness."*

c. **Ephesians 2:1-10**

- i. *miracle* (m) *"You were dead..."*
- ii. *MESSIAH* (M) *"but God... by grace..."*
- iii. *Mission* (m) *"saved...for good works"*

B. Faith & forgiveness have a divine relationship...

C. ALL sins & even blasphemies CAN BE forgiven.

D. *Our help, hope, & healing are ALL in Christ...*

E. **He is risen & livin', sovereign & saving souls!**

VIDEO: *Southern Seminary's*

"Honest Answers #2"

Dr. Thomas Scheiner

V. The **BEST** News

- A. In Christ, the “true news” overcomes the lie(s)...
- B. In Christ, the “good news” overcomes the bad...
- C. In Christ, the “best news” overcomes the worst...

So...

The Gospel is IN...
the unpardonable sin!

For anyone & everyone who hears the true news about the bad & worst news, the good news extends a loving & living invitation, inspection, & inspiration to, from, & by Jesus The Christ... so that they might miraculously be born again, by grace through faith, repenting & believing, loving and living in & for Messiah Jesus, on mission, from here to heaven!

...and THAT is the **BEST** news eternal-history & ALL of humanity has ever, or will ever, receive.

“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”

See Jesus contrasts the ignorant vs. the militant.

- By His grace, thru His Gospel & for His glory, the Holy Spirit does not allow the truly saved Christian(s) to commit that sin!!! “The Holy Spirit SEALED the Christian the moment they were miraculously born again!!!”
- THUS..... per the Word of God, NO true, biblical Christian has ever committed the unpardonable or unforgivable sin!
- We KNOW this because, by definition, authentic Christians have been forgiven & pardoned by the Author & authority of The Almighty... His name is Jesus The Christ!!!
- That’s THE Good News!
- Here’s an extra slice of The Good News for those of you who aren’t sure where you stand... If you’re genuinely concerned (as opposed to merely curious or somewhat dismissive) about all this, your reverent concern is your best indicator that you have not crossed that line that marks the lake of fire’s boundaries.
- By CONTRAST: arrogance in ignorance is a hell-sent & fire-stoking, false-assurance!

REVIEW:

Let us NEVER underestimate the importance of biblical family and getting God's missional points!

I pray that today's "milk" will help to build your hunger & readiness for God's meat.

BOTH, God's really good news
AND His really bad news... go together!

CLOSE:

- To not get this right is to not get The Trinity right... To not get The Trinity right is to not get The Christ right. To not get The Christ right is to not get The Gospel right. To not get The Christ & His Gospel right is to not get Christianity right or righteously. These wrong ways are all warning signs on the broad road that leads to destruction... the easy, smooth, downhill, fast track to hell.

- Wrong Holy Spirit doctrine gives rise to the wrong doctrines of pragmatism, marketing, & the ends justifying the means... The holy, supernatural work that only the Spirit can work has been replaced with either a marketing department OR Satan's slick & slippery "showmen" - both of which lead the reputation building, self-satisfying, counterfeit works of modern day churches is Sardis & Laodicea (whose foundations are more like Sodom & Gomorrah than Smyrna & Philadelphia).
- Pride is always an affront to the Holy Spirit!

I leave you with this truth in love from God's Word...

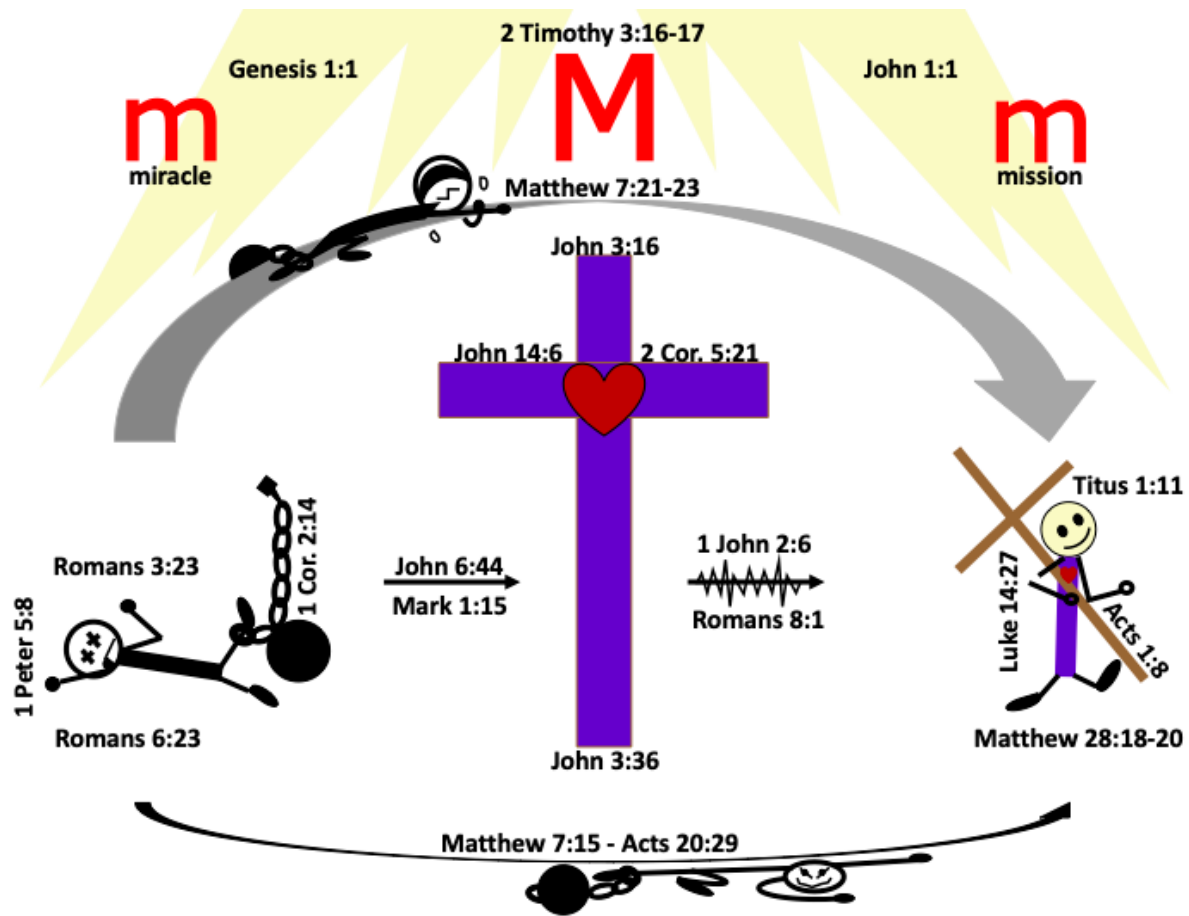
Hell is real.

It will be filled with eternal sin & unforgiven sinners.
Plus, hell will be filled w/ weeping & gnashing of teeth.

For some, today, they are too far gone...

They hate God & have blasphemed The Holy Spirit.
They have already crossed God's point of no return...
dying in the dark shadow of the unpardonable sin.

BUT... everyone else is blessed by the reality of Christ's
"good news!" His truth in love that extends His
invitation globally & to all of humanity...



THE GOSPEL IS IN THE UNPARDONABLE SIN...

JUST ASK THE EVIL PRODIGAL SON...

(Luke 15:11-32)

NOW RESPOND APPROPRIATELY!

PRAYER

STUDY NOTES:

*** Key: no longer questioning the facts of Christ's miraculous power & reality... Now they are charging that His source & alignment is with Beelzebub or Beelzebul (2 different but mutually evil leader of demonic powers/resources). There is distinction without a difference.

The Holy Spirit can be...

- Grieves
- Angered
- "Quenched"
- Blasphemed (see Esau per Hebrews 12:17)

*** Don't confuse tears of remorse vs repentance...

"Whoever blasphemes The Holy Ghost is TOAST!"

- R.C. Sproul

*** Blasphemy & apostasy are friends... if not brothers.

*** Blasphemy is a recruiter, a rebel-rouser, a mob-boss for Satan & his minions. Blasphemy seeks to sow division & discord in the mission & ministry... in faithful obedience & the family of God.

*** What is blasphemy?

- See R.C. Sproul's quote: "Blasphemy is a verbal or communicated sin. It is a sin of action, by which one desecrates the holy character of Gods. (ie. typical "Oh my god!" is blasphemy). >>> Remember the opening of the Lord's Prayer... "Hallowed be Your name..."
- Thank God (literally) that general blasphemy, like above, is NOT the unpardonable sin!

*** Why is blasphemy against The Holy Spirit distinguished & contrasted with blasphemy against the Father & Son (both of which are said to be capable of being forgiven)?

- Per Sproul: "Look through the lens of broader NT context, especially post resurrection Scripture..."
- See Hebrews 6 & especially Hebrews 10... "If we continue to sin after we know... and trample the Son... (no distinguishing between Spirit & Son after Pentecost)..."
- Calling Jesus the Devil with one's heart after knowing in the head that He is the Son of God

- Good News & BAD News = every person, even the Christian, is humanly capable of committing the unpardonable sin in their flesh... BUT, by His grace, thru His Gospel & for His glory, the Holy Spirit does not allow the truly saved Christian(s) to commit that sin!!! “The Holy Spirit SEALED the Christian the moment they were miraculously born again!!!”
- THUS..... per the Word of God, NO true, biblical Christian has ever committed the unpardonable or unforgivable sin!
- We KNOW this because, by definition, authentic Christians have been forgiven & pardoned by the Author & authority of The Almighty... His name is Jesus The Christ!!!
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*** The unpardonable sin (aka “the point of no return”) is putting Jesus The Christ in bed with Beelzebub... the making of bedfellows between the Devil and the Divine.

*** The unpardonable sin, per MacArthur, WAS, per Matthew 12 & Mark 3, attributing to Satan the work of the Holy Spirit. But TODAY, the unpardonable sin, per MacArthur, IS the opposite... it is the attributing to the Holy Spirit, the work of Satan!”

- See all the obvious in charismania
- See also the NAR (New Apostolic Reformation) movement... It's none of those 3 words... They say that in 2001 we enter an era of fresh Apostolic & Prophet “offices” & authority (and everyone is to come under their self-appointed NEW power & appointments... complete with all the self aggrandizing, self righteous, & self rewarding heresies they spew... (KEY CONNECTION = the movement was heavily swayed by Peter Wagner, the man most widely attributed with credit for the “church growth” (pragmatists & homogeneous unit principle, & attraction-model, marketing practices)... Beware the slippery slopes of all extra & contra biblical teachings!

MacArthur: “The Modern Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit”

- The Holy Spirit tends to be the forgotten or most minimized reality in The Trinity...

- He is most often misrepresented within the professing Pentecostal & “charismatic” movements who claim the names of Christ and Christianity...
- HOW? 3 categorical ANSWERS!
 - 1. They attribute to Him words He did not say!
 - 2. They attribute to Him deeds He did not do!
 - 3. They attribute to Him experiences He did not produce!
- NOTE/CRITICAL: We are to BE 2nd Timothy 3:16-17! We are to learn, love, & live BOTH guardrails of God’s Word, will, & ways!
- No matter how dirty some of the heretical bath water gets, we are not authorized or allowed to throw out ANY biblical babies!
- Healthy & faithful, biblical & missional Christians are the Messiah’s miraculous missionaries!
- QUOTE: “Gods wants to be (glorified &) worshipped for who He IS... what He has DONE... & in the WAYS He has DECLARED!” - Mac
- Where the Spirit is active, humility, fruit of The Spirit, & the beatitudes (a Christ-like witness) will ooze & fill the spiritual nostrils of those around... Note the opposite affects of pride & its minions!
- Romans 8 makes for a great home base for a biblical study of the Holy Spirit. - MacArthur (verses:2,4-6, 9, 11, 13-14, v.16, 26...)
- Romans 8... could be subtitled: “Life In The Spirit” - MacArthur

- It's important to know WHAT the Holy Spirit is NOT, & instead WHO He is & what power, purpose(s), promise(s), & presence He has, does, & IS...
- He can be grieved &
- 1st Thess. 5:19 = He can be quenched/hindered
- Acts 5 He is tested & lied to...
- Isaiah 63:10 = He is angered
- Acts 7:51 He can be resisted...
- Here: He can be blasphemed!
- He is absolutely GOD! (See the Trinitarian "formulas" like Matthew 28:18-20). Plus see Him identified as God in Acts 5 when they lied to The Holy Spirit & then it is said that they lied to God. Hence, The Holy Spirit is God!
- Hebrews 9:14 = "He is the Eternal Spirit"
- John 14,15,16 = He is omniscient, all knowing... He reveals & leads God's people into all truth...
- 1 Corinthians 2 = He knows the deep things of God that only God knows...
- Genesis 1:1... He is omnipotent!
- Luke 1:35 = The Holy Spirit will come upon Virgin Mary "with the power of The Most High"... and in
- Acts 1:8 He will come upon every born again believer (** See 2 Peter 1:3 & 2 Corinthians 2:21)
- Psalm 139:7 = Omnipresent!!!
- Romans 1:4 = He is HOLY! Hence He is the HOLY Spirit... (see the famous Isaiah: "Holy, Holy, Holy" with the understanding of that text to be glorifying to

God by making the Trinitarian declaration... Each Person in The Godhead is HOLY'

- 1 Peter 4:24 = He is "The Spirit of glory"
- 2nd Corinthians 3:6 = He is "The life-giving Spirit."
(Jesus IS the Life... The Holy Spirit is the Source of life.)
- SHIFT... He is to be, in EVERY WAY, treated as God!
- Biblical TITLES for Him: God, Lord 2 Corinthians 3:18!!!, Spirit of God in Genesis 1:2; Spirit of The Lord in Luke 4; His Spirit in Numbers 11:29; Spirit of Yahweh in Judges 3:10; Spirit of The Lord God in Isaiah 61; The Spirit of your Father in Matthew 10:20; Spirit of The living God in 2nd Corinthians 3:3; The Spirit of Jesus in Acts 16:7; & The Spirit of Christ in Romans 8:9; The Spirit of His Son in Galatians 4:6; The Spirit of Jesus Christ;
- IMAGINE if the Church always said & did what The Holy Spirit led us to be & do... PLUS... if we said & did ONLY what the true Holy Spirit truly led us to BE & do in His truth in love! Those people, God's Church, & this dark & dying world would not look the same! That possibility is what Christ calls for, commands, & commissions as the reality for His body & family.
- HIS WORKS: (O.T... Creates, Convicts, Comes-upon, Gave Faith, Empowered service (see Exodus 31; Judges 3&6; Psalm 51; and MOST important from the OT is He authored Scripture - see 2nd Peter 1:21)
- HIS WORKS: (N.T... He is The Author who breathed out the Scriptures - 2nd Timothy 3:16; He foretold the

Word - Acts 1:16; He glorifies Christ - John 15&16;
NOTE: in all Scripture

- HOLY SPIRIT with CHRIST's work: (giving Him life; at His baptism; launches His public ministry at age 30; helps Him overcome Satan's temptations in Matthew 4; He anointed Jesus & His preaching in Acts 10:38; He was teaching THRU Christ - John 3:34; He empowered the miracles Jesus did; QUOTE: "Even Christ's death on the cross was a work of the Holy Spirit... I don't know if you've ever thought about that. See Hebrews 9:24." - MacArthur; His resurrection as well - see Romans 8:11)
- WHAT ABOUT WITH SINNERS?
- He convicts sinners (Genesis 6:3).
- He calls sinners (2 Thess.2:13-14).
- He regenerates sinners (John 3:3).
- He witnesses to the truth of Christ (Acts 5:30-32).
- WHAT ABOUT WITH SAINTS?
- He builds on the above...
- He glorifies Christ...
- He exalts Christ...
- He explains & applies The Word...
- He INDWELLS the biblical believer (see Acts 1:8; Romans 8:9; and 1st Corinthians 6 = "You are the temple of The Holy Spirit.")
- He FILLS us (like the wind fills the sails of a ship & moves the vessel) see Ephesians 5:18
- He miraculously infuses us with His fruit - Galatians 4
- He gives us love - Romans 5:5

- He empowers us with missional & ministry gifts (see Romans 12 & 1st Corinthians 12, etc.
- He prays for us - Romans 8:26
- He makes war against sin & our flesh on our behalf - Galatians 5:17
- He comforts us - John 14:16.
- He leads & guides us - Romans 8:14
- He sanctifies us - Galatians 3.
- He empowers us - Acts 1:8

*** Matthew's ch.11&12 have already introduced us to & painted a portrait of those who will be marked as the unforgivable/unpardonable sinners!!!

*** ANYTHING done of value & God honoring substance in the kingdom of God & the world at large is the gracious work of the Holy Spirit!

...To lose that truth & love is to have lost your way!

*** Beware both sides of the "strange fire" debates & debacles!

- Beware stealing His glory.

- Beware changing His story!

*** Reference Francis Chan's book: "The Forgotten God"

ABOVE REPROACH MINISTRIES:

("Misconceptions on the Unpardonable Sin")

- This is NOT for/to Christians
- Jesus is pointing out that the blasphemer's sin problem, which is typically perceived to be a talking or communication (in actions, attitudes, or written forms) problem is, in reality, a heart issue, or better stated, a heart problem,
- People often miss the pattern revealed here of the escalation of rejection...
- The statement/warning comes on the heels of Christ's repeated demonstrations of miraculous healing where demons were involved.
- People often miss or forget that these ministry & miracle windows are intentionally parts of the Messianic Kingdom signs... proving Jesus IS LORD!
- People get confused here, like noted earlier, thinking that Christians can lose their salvation by committing this/a sin.

- Some people wrongly believe the blasphemy described here is merely speaking words antithetical or disrespecting God.
- This theological issue is NOT reduced to or defined by a one time sin/failure. It is NOT a “moment of failure/sin”
- People miss the real clues & glaring proof that identifies these particular, unforgivable sinners... they have NO REPENTANCE!
- Wrong definitions of blasphemy... see the over & under estimations like doubt or murder....
- Confusing accidental sins with the real culprits which are intentional!
- People miss the forgiveness offered in the text & context for the drawn & repentant sinners (in contrast to the hardened blasphemers)
- People underestimate the power, purposes, & promises of The Holy Spirit... thinking He is only around for demonstrative signs & wonders. In reality, He is also calling & convicting... saving & sanctifying believers. The Spirit is testifying to the identity & ministry of Jesus The Christ!
- Some people wrongly interpret this text to mean that mercy & grace are on a short leash...
- Often people miss & do not harmonize the Gospel's affirmation in Luke 12:10, Matthew 12, & Mark 3...
- There is a theological confusion with some who assume that any demonic activity or attacks equates to blaspheming The Holy Spirit... that's just not so.

- People tend to make a mistake that is again connected to the above, insomuch as they don't realize that such blaspheming is a small piece of a much larger problem...
- Slandering The Spirit intentionally is very different than "not getting" or misunderstanding Jesus... This blasphemy is a willing & hostile, aggressive rejection of Jesus.
- Unpardonable & unforgivable need to be defined biblically, complete with their appropriate precursors
- "This age & the age to come" need to be rightly understood...
- Not seeing the portrait painted of said sinners in ch.11 & 12...
- NOW KEY CONTEXTUAL points:
 - 1. Isaiah 42's Messianic prophecy has just been applied to & fulfilled by Jesus.
 - 2. Seeing & Speaking is more than just the miracles... they are metaphors for the bigger context
 - 3. Son of David is in the question to tie in the Gospel's consistent context throughout
 - 4. See the slandering of Christ that He promised His Christians would face
 - 5. See the growing evil & rejection of Christ
 - 6. See the "kingdom language" and intentional contextualization
 - 7. God's truth in love exposes the lack of viable logic & the evil in the blasphemer's work

- 8. Jesus uses the “finger of God” as rooted in Exodus & parallels the Holy Spirit’s rescuing work...
- 9. Jesus doubles down on the point... divided does not work... then the strong man’s home
- 10. Recognizing vs. denying God’s power...

BARNES:

Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.

Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil - See the notes at [Matthew 4:24](#). The same account, substantially, is found in [Mark 3:22-27](#), and [Luke 11:14-26](#).

Matthew 12:23

And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?

Is not this the Son of David? - That is, Is not this the promised "descendant" of David, the Messiah? They were acquainted with the prophecy in [Isaiah 35:5](#), "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped," and they inferred that he must be the promised Messiah who was able to do this. This inference was drawn by the common people, and not by the proud and haughty Pharisees. It is not uncommon that people of plain common sense, though unlearned, see the true meaning of the Bible, while those who are filled with pride and science, falsely so called, are blinded.

Matthew 12:24

But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.

But when the Pharisees heard it ... - It was necessary for the Pharisees, who had determined to reject Jesus of Nazareth, to account in "some" way for the miracles he had performed.

Here was a manifest miracle, an exertion of power unquestionably superior to what people could put forth. The common people were fast drawing the proper inference from it, and coming into the belief that this was the Messiah. The authority and power of the Pharisees were declining. Unless, therefore, some way should be devised of accounting for these facts, their influence would be at an end. Whatever way of accounting for them was adopted, it was necessary that they should acknowledge that there was "superhuman power." The people were

fully persuaded of this, and no man could deny it. They therefore ascribed it to the prince of the devils - to Beelzebub. In this they had two objects:

1. To concede to the people that here was a "miracle," or a work above mere human power.
2. To throw all possible contempt on Jesus. Beelzebub, or Beelzebul, as it is in the Greek, and correctly rendered in the margin, was an opprobrious name given to the leader of the devils as an expression of supreme contempt. See the notes at [Matthew 10:25](#).

Matthew 12:25

And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:

And Jesus knew their thoughts ... - To know the thoughts of the heart belongs only to God, [Psalm 139:2](#); [Jeremiah 17:10](#).

Every kingdom ... - Their subtle and cunning device was completely foiled, and Jesus made their argument recoil on their own heads. A kingdom or a family can prosper only by living in harmony. The different parts and members must unite in promoting the same objects. If divided - if one part undoes what the other does - it must fall. So with the kingdom of Satan. It is your doctrine that Satan has "possessed" these whom I have cured. It is also your doctrine that he has helped me to cure them. If so, then he has helped me to undo what he had done. He has aided me to cast himself out - that is, to oppose and discomfit himself. At this rate, how can there be any stability in his kingdom? It must fall, and Satan must have less than human prudence.

Matthew 12:26

And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?

Matthew 12:27

And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges.

By whom do your children cast them out? - Your disciples; your followers.

See the notes at [Matthew 1:1](#). Christ was not satisfied by showing them the intrinsic absurdity of their argument. He showed them that it might as well be applied to them as to him. your disciples, taught by you and encouraged by you, pretend to cast out devils. If your argument be true that a man who casts out devils must be in league with the devil, then "your disciples" have made a

covenant with him also. You must therefore either give up this argument, or admit that the working of miracles is proof of the assistance of God.

Therefore they shall be your judges - They condemn you and your argument. They are conclusive witnesses against the force of your reasoning.

Matthew 12:28

But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God ... - The Spirit of God, here, means the "power" of God - in Luke, by the "finger" of God.

Compare [Exodus 8:19](#); [Psalm 8:3](#). If this work is not by the aid of Satan, then it is by the aid of God. Then his kingdom, or "reign," is come, [Matthew 3:2](#). The reign of Satan over people, and the reign of God are in opposition. If God expels Satan from his dominion over people, then his reign has come.

Matthew 12:29

Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.

Or else ... - The Saviour makes use of a new illustration to confute the Pharisees, drawn from breaking into a house.

A man could not break into the house of a strong man and take his property unless he had rendered the man himself helpless. If he had taken his goods, it would therefore be sufficient proof that he had bound the man. So I, says he, have taken this "property - this possessed person" - from the dominion of Satan. It is clear proof that I have subdued "Satan himself," the "strong" being that had him in possession. The words "or else" mean "or how:" "How, or in what way, can one, etc."

Spoil his goods - The word "spoil" commonly means, now, to corrupt, injure, or destroy. Here it means "to plunder," to take with violence, as it commonly does in the Bible. See [Colossians 2:8](#), [Colossians 2:15](#); [Exodus 3:22](#).

Matthew 12:30

He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

He that is not with me ... - In addition to his other arguments, Jesus urges this general principle, that there can be but two parties in the universe.

If anyone did not act with him, he was against him. If he gathered not with him, he scattered. This is taken from the practice of persons in harvest. He that did

not gather with him, or "aid" him, scattered abroad, or opposed him. The application of this was, "As I have not united with Satan, but opposed him, there can be no league between us." The charge, therefore, is a false one.

Matthew 12:31

Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

In this place, and in [Mark 3:28-30](#), Jesus states the awful nature of the sin of which they had been guilty. That sin was the sin against the Holy Spirit. It consisted in charging him with being in league with the devil, or accusing him of working his miracles, not by the "spirit" or "power" of God, but by the aid of the prince of the devils. It was therefore a direct insult, abuse, or evil speaking against the Holy Spirit - the spirit by which Jesus worked his miracles. That this was what he intended by this sin, at that time, is clear from [Mark 3:30](#), "because they said he had an unclean spirit." All other sins - all speaking against the Saviour himself - might be remitted. But this sin was clearly against the Holy One; it was alleging that the highest displays of God's mercy and power were the work of the devil; and it argued, therefore, the deepest depravity of mind. The sin of which he speaks is therefore clearly stated. It was accusing him of working miracles by the aid of the devil, thus dishonoring the Holy Spirit.

All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven - That is, only on condition that people repent and believe. If they continue in this sin they cannot be forgiven, [Mark 16:16](#); [Romans 2:6-9](#).

Blasphemy - Injurious or evil speaking of God. See the notes at [Matthew 9:3](#).

A word against the Son of man - The Jews were offended at the humble life and appearance of the Saviour. They reproached him as being a Nazarene - sprung from Nazareth, a place from which no good was expected to proceed; with being a Galilean, from Galilee, a place from which no prophet came, [John 7:52](#). Jesus says that reproaches of this kind could be pardoned. Reflections on his poverty, on his humble birth, and on the lowliness of his human nature might be forgiven; but for those which affected his divine nature, accusing him of being in league with the devil, denying his divinity, and attributing the power which manifestly implied divinity to the prince of fallen spirits, there could be no pardon. This sin was a very different thing from what is now often supposed to be the sin against the Holy Spirit. It was a wanton and blasphemous attack on the divine power and nature of Christ. Such a sin God would not forgive.

Speaketh against the Holy Ghost - The word "ghost" means "spirit," and probably refers here to the "divine nature" of Christ - the power by which he performed his

miracles. There is no evidence that it refers to the third person of the Trinity; and the meaning of the whole passage may be: "He that speaks against me as a man of Nazareth - that speaks contemptuously of my humble birth, etc., may be pardoned; but he that reproaches my divine nature, charging me with being in league with Satan, and blaspheming the power of God manifestly displayed "by me," can never obtain forgiveness."

Neither in this world, nor in that which is to come - That is, as Mark expresses it, "hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." This fixes the meaning of the phrase. It means, then, not the future age or dispensation, known among the Jews as the world to come, but it means that the guilt will be unpardoned forever; that such is the purpose of God that he will not forgive a sin so direct, presumptuous, and awful. It cannot be inferred from this that any sins will be forgiven in hell. The Saviour meant simply to say that there were "no possible circumstances" in which the offender could obtain forgiveness. He certainly did "not" say that any sin unpardoned here would be pardoned hereafter.

Matthew 12:32

And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

MATTHEW HENRY: vv.22-37

Verses 22-37

In these verses we have,

I. Christ's glorious conquest of Satan, in the gracious cure of one who, by the divine permission, was under his power, and in his possession, v. 22. Here observe,

1. The man's case was very sad; he was possessed with a devil. More cases of this kind occurred in Christ's time than usual, that Christ's power might be the more magnified, and his purpose the more manifested, in opposing and dispossessing Satan; and that it might the more evidently appear, that he came to destroy the works of the devil. This poor man that was possessed was blind and dumb; a miserable case! he could neither see to help himself, nor speak to

others to help him. A soul under Satan's power, and led captive by him, is blind in the things of God, and dumb at the throne of grace; sees nothing, and says nothing to the purpose. Satan blinds the eye of faith, and seals up the lips of prayer.

2. His cure was very strange, and the more so, because sudden; he healed him. Note, The conquering and dispossessing of Satan is the healing of souls. And the cause being removed, immediately the effect ceased; the blind and dumb both spake and saw. Note, Christ's mercy is directly opposite to Satan's malice; his favours, to the devil's mischiefs. When Satan's power is broken in the soul, the eyes are opened to see God's glory, and the lips opened to speak his praise.

II. The conviction which this gave to the people to all the people: they were amazed. Christ had wrought divers miracles of this kind before; but his works are not the less wonderful, nor the less to be wondered at, for their being often repeated. They inferred from it, "Is not this the Son of David? The Messiah promised, that was to spring from the loins of David? Is not this he that should come?" We may take this, 1. As an enquiring question; they asked, Is not this the Son of David? But they did not stay for an answer: the impressions were cogent, but they were transient. It was a good question that they started; but, it should seem, it was soon lost, and was not prosecuted. Such convictions as these should be brought to a head, and then they are likely to be brought to the heart. Or, 2. as an affirming question; Is not this the Son of David? "Yes, certainly it is, it can be no other; such miracles as these plainly evince that the kingdom of the Messiah is now setting up." And they were the people, the vulgar sort of the spectators, that drew this inference from Christ's miracles. Atheists will say, "That was because they were less prying than the Pharisees;" no, the matter of fact was obvious, and required not much search: but it was because they were less prejudiced and biassed by worldly interest. So plain and easy was the way made to this great truth of Christ being the Messiah and Saviour of the world, that the common people could not miss it; the wayfaring men, though fools, could not err therein. See Isa. 35:8. It was found of them that sought it. It is an instance of the condescensions of divine grace, that the things that were hid from the wise and prudent were revealed unto babes. The world by wisdom knew not God, and by the foolish things the wise were confounded.

III. The blasphemous cavil of the Pharisees, v. 24. The Pharisees were a sort of men that pretended to more knowledge in, and zeal for, the divine law, than other people; yet they were the most inveterate enemies to Christ and his doctrine. They were proud of the reputation they had among the people; that fed their pride, supported their power, and filled their purses; and when they heard the people say, Is not this the Son of David? they were extremely irritated, more at that than at the miracle itself; this made them jealous of our Lord Jesus, and

apprehensive, that as his interest in the people's esteem increased, theirs must of course be eclipsed and diminished; therefore they envied him, as Saul did his father David, because of what the women sang of him, 1 Sa. 18:7, 8. Note, Those who bind up their happiness in the praise and applause of men, expose themselves to a perpetual uneasiness upon every favourable word that they hear said of any other. The shadow of honour followed Christ, who fled from it, and fled from the Pharisees, who were eager in the pursuit of it. They said, "This fellow does not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils, and therefore is not the Son of David." Observe,

1. How scornfully they speak of Christ, this fellow; as if that precious name of his, which is as ointment poured forth, were not worthy to be taken into their lips. It is an instance of their pride and superciliousness, and their diabolical envy, that the more people magnified Christ, the more industrious they were to vilify him. It is a bad thing to speak of good men with disdain because they are poor.

2. How blasphemously they speak of his miracles; they could not deny the matter of fact; it was as plain as the sun, that devils were cast out by the word of Christ; nor could they deny that it was an extraordinary thing, and supernatural. Being thus forced to grant the premises, they had no other way to avoid the conclusion, that this is the Son of David, than by suggesting that Christ cast out devils by Beelzebub; that there was a compact between Christ and the devil; pursuant to that, the devil was not cast out, but did voluntarily retire, and give back by consent and with design: or as if, by an agreement with the ruling devil, he had power to cast out the inferior devils. No surmise could be more palpably false and vile than this; that he, who is Truth itself, should be in combination with the father of lies, to cheat the world. This was the last refuge, or subterfuge rather, or an obstinate infidelity, that was resolved to stand it out against the clearest conviction. Observe, Among the devils there is a prince, the ringleader of the apostasy from God and rebellion against him; but this prince is Beelzebub—the god of a fly, or a dunghill god. How art thou fallen, O Lucifer! from an anger of light, to be a lord of flies! Yet this is the prince of the devils too, the chief of the gang of infernal spirits.

IV. Christ's reply to this base insinuation, v. 25–30. Jesus knew their thoughts. Note, Jesus Christ knows what we are thinking at any time, knows what is in man; he understands our thoughts afar off. It should seem that the Pharisees could not for shame speak it out, but kept it in their minds; they could not expect to satisfy the people with it; they therefore reserved it for the silencing of the convictions of their own consciences. Note, Many are kept off from their duty by that which they are ashamed to own, but which they cannot hide from Jesus Christ: yet it is probable that the Pharisees had whispered what they thought among themselves, to help to harden one another; but Christ's reply is said to be

to their thoughts, because he knew with what mind, and from what principle, they said it; that they did not say it in their haste, but that it was the product of a rooted malignity.

Christ's reply to this imputation is copious and cogent, that every mouth may be stopped with sense and reason, before it be stopped with fire and brimstone. Here are three arguments by which he demonstrates the unreasonableness of this suggestion.

1. It would be very strange, and highly improbably, that Satan should be cast out by such a compact, because then Satan's kingdom would be divided against itself; which, considering his subtlety, is not a thing to be imagined, v. 25, 26.

(1.) Here is a known rule laid down, that in all societies a common ruin is the consequence of mutual quarrels: Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every family too: *Quae enim domus tam stabilis est, quae tam firma civitas, quae non odiis atque dissidiis funditus everti possit?*—For what family is so strong, what community so firm, as not to be overturned by enmity and dissension? *Cic. Lael. 7.* Divisions commonly end in desolations; if we clash, we break; if we divide one from another, we become an easy prey to a common enemy; much more if we bite and devour one another, shall we be consumed one of another, *Gal. 5:15.* Churches and nations have known this by sad experience.

(2.) The application of it to the case in hand (v. 26), If Satan cast out Satan; if the prince of the devils should be at variance with the inferior devils, the whole kingdom and interest would soon be broken; nay, if Satan should come into a compact with Christ, it must be to his own ruin; for the manifest design and tendency of Christ's preaching and miracles was to overthrow the kingdom of Satan, as a kingdom of darkness, wickedness, and enmity to God; and to set up, upon the ruins of it, a kingdom of light, holiness, and love. The works of the devil, as a rebel against God, and a tyrant over the souls of men, were destroyed by Christ; and therefore it was the most absurd thing imaginable, to think that Beelzebub should at all countenance such a design, or come into it: if he should fall in with Christ, how should then his kingdom stand? He would himself contribute to the overthrow of it. Note, The devil has a kingdom, a common interest, in opposition to God and Christ, which, to the utmost of his power, he will make to stand, and he will never come into Christ's interests; he must be conquered and broken by Christ, and therefore cannot submit and bend to him. What concord or communion can there be between light and darkness, Christ and Belial, Christ and Beelzebub? Christ will destroy the devil's kingdom, but he needs not do it by any such little arts and projects as that of a secret compact with Beelzebub; no, this victory must be obtained by nobler methods. Let the

prince of the devils muster up all his forces, let him make use of all his powers and politics, and keep his interests in the closest confederacy, yet Christ will be too hard for his united force, and his kingdom shall not stand.

2. It was not at all strange, or improbable, that devils should be cast out by the Spirit of God; for,

(1.) How otherwise do your children cast them out? There were those among the Jews who, by invocation of the name of the most high God, or the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, did sometimes cast out devils. Josephus speaks of some in his time that did it; we read of Jewish exorcists (Acts 19:13), and of some that in Christ's name cast out devils, though they did not follow him (Mk. 9:38), or were not faithful to him, ch. 7:22. These the Pharisees condemned not, but imputed what they did to the Spirit of God, and valued themselves and their nation upon it. It was therefore merely from spite and envy to Christ, that they would own that others cast out devils by the Spirit of God, but suggest that he did it by compact with Beelzebub. Note, It is the way of malicious people, especially the malicious persecutors of Christ and Christianity, to condemn the same thing in those they hate, which they approve of and applaud in those they have a kindness for: the judgments of envy are made, not by things, but persons; not by reason, but prejudice. But those were very unfit to sit in Moses's seat, who knew faces, and knew nothing else in judgment: Therefore they shall be your judges; "This contradicting of yourselves will rise up in judgment against you at the last great day, and will condemn you." Note, In the last judgment, not only every sin, but every aggravation of it, will be brought into the account, and some of our notions that were right and good will be brought in evidence against us, to convict us of partiality.

(2.) This casting out of devils was a certain token and indication of the approach and appearance of the kingdom of God (v. 28); "But if it be indeed that I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, as certainly I do, then you must conclude, that though you are unwilling to receive it, yet the kingdom of the Messiah is now about to be set up among you." Other miracles that Christ wrought proved him sent of God, but this proved him sent of God to destroy the devil's kingdom and his works. Now that great promise was evidently fulfilled, that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head, Gen. 3:15. "Therefore that glorious dispensation of the kingdom of God, which has been long expected, is now commenced; slight it at your peril." Note, [1.] The destruction of the devil's power is wrought by the Spirit of God; that Spirit who works to the obedience of faith, overthrows the interest of that spirit who works in the children of unbelief and disobedience. [2.] The casting out of devils is a certain introduction to the kingdom of God. If the devil's interest in a soul be not only checked by custom or external restraints, but sunk and broken by the Spirit of God, as a Sanctifier, no doubt but the kingdom of God is

come to that soul, the kingdom of grace, a blessed earnest of the kingdom of the glory.

3. The comparing of Christ's miracles, particularly this of casting out devils, with his doctrine, and the design and tendency of his holy religion, evidenced that he was so far from being in league with Satan, that he was at open enmity and hostility against him (v. 29); How can one enter into a strong man's house, and plunder his goods, and carry them away, except he first bind the strong man? And then he may do what he pleases with his goods. The world, that sat in darkness, and lay in wickedness, was in Satan's possession, and under his power, as a house in the possession and under the power of a strong man; so is every unregenerate soul; there Satan resides, there he rules. Now, (1.) The design of Christ's gospel was to spoil the devil's house, which, as a strong man, he kept in the world; to turn the people from darkness to light, from sin to holiness, from this world to a better, from the power of Satan unto God (Acts 26:18); to alter the property of souls. (2.) Pursuant to this design, he bound the strong man, when he cast out unclean spirits by his word: thus he wrested the sword out of the devil's hand, that he might wrest the sceptre out of it. The doctrine of Christ teaches us how to construe his miracles, and when he showed how easily and effectually he could cast the devil out of people's bodies, he encouraged all believers to hope that, whatever power Satan might usurp and exercise in the souls of men, Christ by his grace would break it: he will spoil him, for it appears that he can bind him. When nations were turned from the service of idols to serve the living God, when some of the worst of sinners were sanctified and justified, and became the best of saints, then Christ spoiled the devil's house, and will spoil it more and more.

4. It is here intimated, that this holy war, which Christ was carrying on with vigour against the devil and his kingdom, was such as would not admit of a neutrality (v. 30), He that is not with me is against me. 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 (Lu. 9:50); but in the great quarrel between Christ and the devil, no peace is to be sought, nor any such favourable 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. When the dispute is between God and Baal, there is no halting between two (1 Ki. 18:21), there is no trimming between Christ and Belial; for the kingdom of Christ, as it is eternally opposite to, so it will be eternally victorious over, the devil's kingdom; and therefore in this cause there is no sitting still with Gilead beyond Jordan, or Asher on the sea-shore, (Jdg. 4:16, 17), we must be entirely, faithfully, and immovably, on Christ's side; it is the right side, and will at last be the rising side. See Ex. 32:26.

The latter clause is to the same purport: He that gathereth not with me scattereth. Note, (1.) Christ's errand into the world was to gather, to gather in his harvest, to gather in those whom the Father had given him, Jn. 11:52; Eph. 1:10. (2.) Christ expects and requires from those who are with him, that they gather with him; that they not only gather to him themselves, but do all they can in their places to gather others to him, and so to strengthen his interest. (3.) Those who will not appear, and act, as furtherers of Christ's kingdom, will be looked upon, and dealt with, as hinderers of it; if we gather not with Christ, we scatter; it is not enough, not to do hurt, but we must do good. Thus is the breach widened between Christ and Satan, to show that there was no such compact between them as the Pharisees whispered.

V. Here is a discourse of Christ's upon this occasion, concerning tongue-sins; Wherefore I say unto you. He seems to turn from the Pharisees to the people, from disputing to instructing; and from the sin of the Pharisees he warns the people concerning three sorts of tongue-sins; for others' harms are admonitions to us.

1. Blasphemous words against the Holy Ghost are the worst kind of tongue-sins, and unpardonable, v. 31, 32.

(1.) Here is a gracious assurance of the pardon of all sin upon gospel terms: this Christ says to us, and it is a comfortable saying, that the greatness of sin shall be no bar to our acceptance with God, if we truly repent and believe the gospel: All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. Though the sin has been as scarlet and crimson (Isa. 1:18), though ever so heinous in its nature, ever so much aggravated by its circumstances, and ever so often repeated, though it reach up to the heavens, yet with the Lord there is mercy, that reacheth beyond the heavens; mercy will be extended even to blasphemy, a sin immediately touching God's name and honour. Paul obtained mercy, who had been a blasphemer, 1 Tim. 1:13. Well may we say, Who is a God like unto thee, pardoning iniquity? Micah 7:18. Even words spoken against the Son of man shall be forgiven; as theirs were who reviled him at his death, many of whom repented and found mercy. Christ herein has set an example to all the sons of men, to be ready to forgive words spoken against them: I, as a deaf man, heard not. Observe, They shall be forgiven unto men, not to devils; this is love to the whole world of mankind, above the world of fallen angels, that all sin is pardonable to them.

(2.) Here is an exception of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which is here declared to be the only unpardonable sin. See here,

[1.] What this sin; it is speaking against the Holy Ghost. See what malignity there is in tongue-sins, when the only unpardonable sin is so. But Jesus knew their thoughts, v. 25. It is not all speaking against the person or essence of the Holy Ghost, or some of his more private operations, or merely the resisting of his internal working in the sinner himself, that is here meant; for who then should be saved? It is adjudged in our law, that an act of indemnity shall always be construed in favour of that grace and clemency which is the intention of the act; and therefore the exceptions in the act are not to be extended further than needs must. The gospel is an act of indemnity; none are excepted by name, nor any by description, but those only that blaspheme the Holy Ghost; which therefore must be construed in the narrowest sense: all presuming sinners are effectually cut off by the conditions of the indemnity, faith and repentance; and therefore the other exceptions must not be stretched far: and this blasphemy is excepted, not for any defect of mercy in God or merit in Christ, but because it inevitably leaves the sinner in infidelity and impenitency. We have reason to think that none are guilty of this sin, who believe that Christ is the Son of God, and sincerely desire to have part in his merit and mercy: and those who fear they have committed this sin, give a good sign that they have not. The learned Dr. Whitby very well observes, that Christ speaks not of what should be (Mk. 3:28; Lu. 12:10); Whosoever shall blaspheme. As for those who blasphemed Christ when he was here upon earth, and called him a Winebibber, a Deceiver, a Blasphemer, and the like, they had some colour of excuse, because of the meanness of his appearance, and the prejudices of the nation against him; and the proof of his divine mission was not perfected till after his ascension; and therefore, upon their repentance, they shall be pardoned: and it is hoped that they may be convinced by the pouring out of the Spirit, as many of them were, who had been his betrayers and murderers. But if, when the Holy Ghost is given, in his inward gifts of revelation, speaking with tongues, and the like, such as were the distributions of the Spirit among the apostles, if they continue to blaspheme the Spirit likewise, as an evil spirit, there is no hope of them that they will ever be brought to believe in Christ; for First, Those gifts of the Holy Ghost in the apostles were the last proof that God designed to make use of for the confirming of the gospel, and were still kept in reserve, when other methods preceded. Secondly, This was the most powerful evidence, and more apt to convince than miracles themselves. Thirdly, Those therefore who blaspheme this dispensation of the Spirit, cannot possibly be brought to believe in Christ; those who shall impute them to a collusion with Satan, as the Pharisees did the miracles, what can convince them? This is such a strong hold of infidelity as a man can never be beaten out of, and is therefore unpardonable, because hereby repentance is hid from the sinner's eyes.

JOHN CALVIN:

saw.

Matthew 12:22-24

Matthew 12:22-24

Mark 3:20-22

Luke 11:14-15

22. Then was brought to him one who was tormented by a devil, blind and dumb; and he cured him, so that the blind and dumb person both spoke and saw. 23. And all the multitudes were astonished, and said, Is not this the son of David? 24. But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This man doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub prince of the devils.

20. And they come into the house, and immediately a multitude assembled, so that they could not even eat bread. [98] 21. And when those who were related to him heard it, they went out to lay hands on him; [99] for they said, He is gone mad. [100] 22. And the Scribes, who had come down from Jerusalem, said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils he casteth out devils.

14. And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. [101] And when he had cast out the devil, the dumb person spoke, and the multitudes wondered. [102] 15. And some of them said, By Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, he casteth out devils. [103]

Mark 3:20. And they come into the house. Mark undoubtedly takes in a somewhat extended period of time, when he passes from the miracles to that wicked conspiracy which the relatives of Christ formed with each other, to bind him as if he had been a madman. Matthew and Luke mention not more than a single miracle, as having given to the Pharisees an opportunity of slander; but as all the three agree in this last clause which is contained in Mark's narrative, I have thought it proper to insert it here.

It is wonderful that such wickedness should have been found among the relatives of Christ, who ought to have been the first to aid him in advancing the kingdom of God. When they see that he has already obtained some reputation, their ambition leads them to desire that he should be admired in Jerusalem; for they exhort him to go up to that city,

that he may show himself more openly, (John 7:3,4.)

But now that they perceive him to be hated on one side by the rulers, exposed on another to numerous slanders, and even despised by the great body of the people--to prevent any injury, or envy, or dishonor, from arising to the whole family, they form the design of laying hands on him, and binding him at home, as if he had been a person who labored under mental derangement; and, as appears from the words of the Evangelist, such was their actual belief.

Hence we learn, first, how great is the blindness of the human mind, in forming such perverse judgments about the glory of God when openly displayed. Certainly, in all that Christ said and did, the power of the Holy Spirit shone magnificently; and if others had not clearly perceived it, how could it be unknown to his relatives, who were intimately acquainted with him? But because Christ's manner of acting does not please the world, and is so far from gaining its good graces that it exposes him to the resentments of many, they give out that he is deranged. Let us learn, in the second place, that the light of faith does not proceed from flesh and blood, but from heavenly grace, that no man may glory in any thing else than in the regeneration of the Spirit; as Paul tells us,

If any man wishes to be considered to be in Christ, let him be a new creature, ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#).)

Matthew [2](#) [Corinthians 12:22](#). Then was brought to him. Luke explains from the effect, that the devil by which the man was possessed was dumb; but Matthew says, that a twofold plague had been inflicted on the man. Many persons, no doubt, are blind and deaf on account of natural defects; but it is evident, that this man had become blind, and had been deprived of the use of speech, though there was no defect in his optical nerves, [104] or in the proportion of his tongue. We need not wonder that so much liberty should be allowed to Satan in injuring the bodily senses, when God justly permits him to corrupt or pervert all the faculties of the soul.

23. And all the people were astonished. Hence we infer, that there was a visible display of the power of God, which drew upon him the admiration of the great body of the people, who were not at all actuated by any wicked disposition. For how came it that all admired, but because the fact compelled them to do so? And certainly there is not one of us, who does not see in this narrative, as in a mirror, an unwonted power of God: and hence it follows, that a diabolical venom must have seized the minds of the scribes, who were not ashamed to slander so remarkable a work of God. But we must attend to the result of the miracle. Moved with admiration, those who saw it ask each other, Is not Jesus the Christ? Acknowledging the power of God, they are led, as it were by the hand, to faith. Not that they suddenly profited as much as they ought to have done, (for they speak doubtfully;) but yet it is no small proficiency to be aroused to consider

more attentively the glory of Christ. Some look upon this as a full affirmation, but the words convey no such meaning; and the fact itself shows, that an unexpected occurrence had struck them forcibly, and that they did not form a decided opinion, but only that it occurred to them that he might be the Christ.

24. But when the Pharisees heard it. The scribes cannot withhold the acknowledgment of a fact so open and manifest, and yet they maliciously carp [105] at what Christ did by Divine power. Not only do they obscure the praise of the miracle, but endeavor to turn it into a reproach, as if it were performed by magical enchantment; and that work, which could not be ascribed to a man, is alleged by them to have the devil for its author. Of the word Beelzebub I have spoken under the Tenth Chapter, [106] and of the prince of the devils I have said a little under the Ninth Chapter. [107] The opinion expressed by the scribes, that there is a prince among wicked spirits, did not arise from a mistake of the common people, or from supposition, but from a conviction entertained among the godly, that the reprobate have a head, in the same manner as Christ is the Head of the Church.

Footnotes:

[98] "Ils ne pouvoient pas mesme prendre leur repas;" -- "they could not even take their meal."

[99] "Ils sortirent pour le saisir;" -- "they went out to seize him."

[100] "Car ils disoient qu'il estoit hors du sens;" -- "for they said that he was out of his senses."

[101] "Un diable qui estoit muet;" -- "a devil which was dumb."

[102] "Dont les troupes s'emeuvellerent;" -- "at which the multitudes wondered."

[103] "C'est par Beel-zebub, prince des diables, qu'il iette hors les diables;" -- "it is by Beelzebub, prince of the devils, that he casteth out devils."

[104] "Aux nerfs appelez Optiques, qui sont les conduits de la veue;"-- "in what are called the Optical nerves, which are the conductors of vision."

[105] "Ils ne laissent pas toutesfois de ronger, comme par despit et d'un vouloir malicieux;" -- "and yet they do not fail to carp as with spite, and with a wicked disposition."

[106] Harmony, volume 1.[[9]p. 459.

[107] Harmony, volume 1: [10]p. 419. The reader must have observed that, when our Author has explained a phrase or illustrated a fact, he seldom repeats what he had said, but refers to the earlier portions of his work, in which the information may be found. It is not improbable that this may have been his leading motive for adopting the plan of a Harmony, instead of writing a separate Commentary on each Gospel. He had made some observations on [Matthew 9:34](#), But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils by the prince of the devils; and takes for granted, that the terms which occur in that passage require no farther elucidation. But it would appear to have escaped his recollection that, on the occasion alluded to, he satisfied himself with general remarks on the "wicked slander" of the Pharisees, and took no notice of the phrase, prince of the devils. The deficiency is partly supplied by an explanation which he now makes. -- Ed.

[Matthew 12:23](#)

And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?

[Matthew 12:24](#)

But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.

[Matthew 12:25](#)

And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:

[Matthew 12:25-32](#)

[Matthew 12:25-32](#)

[Mark 3:23-30](#)

[Luke 11:16-23](#)

25. But as Jesus knew their thoughts, he said to them, [108] Every kingdom divided against itself shall be laid waste; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. 26. And if Satan casteth out Satan, he is divided against himself, and how then shall his kingdom stand? 27. And if I, by the assistance of Beelzebub, cast out devils, by whose assistance do your children cast them out? therefore they shall judge concerning you. [109] 28. But if by the Spirit of God I cast out devils, then the kingdom of God has come to you. 29. Otherwise, how can a man enter into the house of a strong man, and pillage his property, unless he first bind the strong man, and then he will pillage his house? 30. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth. 31. Therefore I say to you, All sin and blasphemy [110] shall be forgiven to men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven to men. 32. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but he who

shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in the present life nor in the future.

23. And having called them to him, he spoke in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? 24. And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26. And if Satan hath risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. [111] 27. No man can enter into the house of a strong man, and pillage his property, unless he first bind the strong man, and then he will pillage his house. 28. Verily I say to you, All sins shall be forgiven to the sons of men, and blasphemies with which they shall blaspheme: 29. But he who shall speak blasphemy against the Holy Spirit hath not forgiveness to eternity, [112] but is exposed to eternal judgment. 30. For they said, He hath an unclean spirit. [113]

16. And others tempting him sought from him a sign from heaven. 17. But as he knew their thoughts, [114] he said to them, Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a house against a house falleth. [115] 18. But if Satan also is divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? for you say that by Beelzebub I cast out devils. 19. But if I cast out devils by Beelzebub, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your [Judges 20](#). But if I cast out devils by the finger of God, truly has the kingdom of God come to you. 21. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his property is at peace; 22. But when a stronger than he cometh upon him, and overcometh him, he taketh from him all his armor, in which he trusted, and divideth his spoils. 23. He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.

[Luke 12:10](#).

And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but he who shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him.

[Matthew 12:25](#). But as Jesus knew their thoughts. Though Christ knew sufficiently well, and had often learned by experience, that the scribes, in the exercise of their malice [116] were in the habit of putting an unfavorable construction on every thing that he did, yet Matthew and Luke, I have no doubt, mean that Christ was a discernor of their hearts. [117] And indeed it is probable, that they spoke so openly against Christ, that their calumnies reached his ears; but Christ knew by his Divine Spirit the dispositions which led them to slander him. For it frequently happens that erroneous judgments are formed by men who do not intentionally, after all, oppose what is right, but err through ignorance; who do not cherish a hidden and concealed venom, but whose rashness carries them headlong. [118] The meaning therefore is, that Christ reproved them with the greater severity, because he was a witness and judge of their inward malice.

Every kingdom divided against itself. In refuting the calumny alleged against him, he first quotes a common proverb. This refutation may appear to be not quite satisfactory. We know what subtle methods Satan sometimes employs, presenting all the while an appearance of discord, in order to entrap the minds of men by superstitions. Thus, for example, the exorcisms of Popery are nothing else than feats of dexterity, in which Satan pretends to fight with himself. But no suspicion of this nature fell on Christ; for he cast out devils in such a manner, as to restore to God the men in whom they dwelt sound and whole. Whenever Satan enters into a collusion with himself, he pretends to be vanquished, and yet it is himself that triumphs. But Christ attacked Satan in open combat, threw him down, and left him nothing remaining. He did not lay him low in one respect, that he might give him greater stability in another, but stripped him completely of all his armor. Christ therefore reasons justly, that there is no community of interest between him and Satan, because that father of cunning [119] keeps one object in view -- the preservation of his kingdom.

But perhaps it will be objected, that the devils are often hurried along, by giddiness and blind madness, to destroy themselves. The answer is easy. The words of Christ mean nothing more than that it was absurd in the scribes to maintain, that the devil, who endeavors by every method to make men his slaves, should, of his own accord, destroy the power which he possessed over them. Besides, it ought to be remembered, that common proverbs were employed by Christ in such a manner, as to be merely probable conjectures, and not solid arguments; and that, when he speaks of what is known and well attested, he finds it easier to reach the conscience of his adversaries. [120] Everybody knew that Christ had driven Satan from his possession, and nothing was plainer than that all his miracles tended to this object; and hence it was easy to conclude, that his power, which was so much opposed to Satan, was divine.

27. By whom do your children cast them out? He charges them with passing an unjust and malicious decision, because in the same case they did not decide in a similar manner, but as they were affected towards the persons. Now this inequality shows, that their prevailing motive was not a regard to what is just and right, but blind love or hatred; and that it was even an evidence of wicked self-love (*philautias*) and envy, to condemn in Christ what they praised in their own children. By your children some understand the children of the whole nation; and some think that the Apostles are so called, because they were acknowledged to be children, while Christ was treated as if he had been a foreigner. [121] Others refer it to the ancient Prophets. I have no doubt that he means the Exorcists, who were at that time generally employed among the Jews, as is evident from the Acts of the Apostles, (19:19.) There is reason to believe, that no greater kindness would be exercised in judging of the disciples of Christ than of their Master; and

to apply these words to the dead is a forced construction, when they manifestly denote a comparison of the present time.

There was indeed no statute of the Law for having Exorcists among the Jews; but we know that God, in order to maintain their fidelity to his covenant, and their purity of worship, often testified his presence among them by a variety of miracles. It is even possible that there were persons who cast out devils by calling on the name of the Lord; and the people, having experienced such a display of the power of God, rashly concluded that it was an ordinary office. [122] The Papists afterwards, resolving not to occupy a lower rank, imitated them by creating Exorcists; and in this way were apes of apes. Besides, it was not necessary that Christ should approve of those exorcisms, in order to point out the malice of those who wished to have them regarded as sacred, and as authorized by the name of God; for the objection was, as we say, of a personal nature. [123]

Therefore they shall judge concerning you. These words are not to be taken literally, but the meaning is: "We need not go far to seek your condemnation. You attribute to Beelzebub the miracles which I have performed, and you praise the same things in your own children. You have at home what is sufficient to condemn you." But if any one prefer to understand them differently, as reproaching them with the grace of God, which was sometimes exhibited through the Exorcists, I do not greatly object to that view. Though they were greatly degenerated, yet the Lord was pleased not to leave them altogether without evidences of his power, that there might be some testimony to authorize the priesthood in general, and the service of the temple; for it was of the highest importance that there should be evident marks to distinguish them from the superstitions of the Gentiles. I look upon the former view, however, as the natural one.

28. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God. Luke says, if I cast out devils by The Finger of God; employing the word Finger metaphorically instead of the Spirit. As God works, and exerts his power, by his Spirit, it is with propriety that the word Finger is applied to him. And this mode of expression was common among the Jews, as Moses relates that Pharaoh's magicians said, This is the finger of God Now Christ infers from what he has already stated, that the scribes prove themselves to be ungrateful to God, by being unwilling that He should reign among them. Hitherto, he replied to their idle calumny; but now, he treats them as convicted persons, and charges them not to make ungodly opposition to the kingdom of God. He does not confine himself to a single miracle, but takes occasion from it to discourse on the object of his coming, reminds them that they ought not merely to look at one remarkable fact, but at a far more important truth, that it was the will of God, by revealing His Messiah, to raise up their salvation which was fallen, and to restore his kingdom among them. Thus we see that

Christ complains of their ingratitude, in madly rejecting from the midst of them the inestimable grace of God. The kingdom of God hath come to you The word come is emphatic, and implies that, without any request from them, God appears as their Redeemer, while they do everything that is in their power to drive him away, and, when he is present and prepared for their salvation, refuse to give him a place.

29. How can any one enter into the house of a strong man? Though the Evangelists differ a little as to words, there is a perfect agreement among them as to the substance of this discourse. Christ is pursuing the subject, on which he had lately touched, about the kingdom of God, and declares it to be necessary that Satan be violently driven out, in order that God may establish his kingdom among men. What he now states is nothing else than a confirmation of the preceding statement. But to ascertain more fully the intention of Christ, we must call to our recollection that analogy which Matthew (8:17) traces between the visible and the spiritual layouts which Christ bestows. [124] Every benefit which the bodies of men received from Christ was intended to have a reference to their souls. Thus, in rescuing the bodily senses of men from the tyranny of the devil, he proclaimed that the Father had sent him as a Deliverer, to destroy his spiritual tyranny over their souls.

I now return to his words. He maintains that a strong and powerful tyrant cannot be deprived of his dominion, till he is stripped of his armor; for if he is not met by a force superior to his own, he will never yield of his own accord. Why is this asserted? First, we know that the devil is everywhere called the prince of the world Now the tyranny which he exercises is defended on every side by strong ramparts. His snares for entrapping men are beyond all calculation; nay, men are already his slaves, and so firmly bound by a variety of fetters, that they rather cherish the slavery, to which they are devoted, than make any aspirations after freedom. There are also innumerable evils which he inflicts upon them, by which he holds them in wretched oppression under his feet. In short, there is nothing to prevent him from tyrannizing over the world without control. Not that he can do anything without the permission of the Creator, but because Adam, having withdrawn from the dominion of God, has subjected all his posterity to this foreign sway.

Now though it is contrary to nature that the devil reigns, and though it is by, just punishment of God, on account of sin, that men are subjected to his tyranny, yet he remains in quiet possession of his kingdom, and may insult us at his pleasure, till a stronger than he shall rise up against him. But this stronger person is not to be found on earth, for men have not sufficient power to relieve themselves; and therefor it was promised that a Redeemer would come from heaven. Now this kind of redemption Christ shows to be necessary, in order to wrench from the

devil, by main force, what he will never quit till he is compelled. By these words he informs us, that it is in vain for men to expect deliverance, till Satan has been subdued by a violent struggle. [125]

He expressly accuses the scribes of ignorance, in not understanding the principles of the kingdom of God. But this reproof applies almost equally to all, for all are chargeable with the same folly. There is no man who does not loudly boast that he desires the kingdom of God; and yet we do not permit Christ to fight boldly, as the occasion requires, in order to rescue us from the power of our tyrant; just as if a sick man were to entreat the aid of a physician, and then to refuse every remedy. We now see the reason why Christ introduced this parable. It was to show, that the scribes were hostile to the kingdom of God, the beginnings of which they maliciously resisted. Let us also learn that, as we are all subject to the tyranny of Satan, there is no other way in which he commences his reign within us, than when he rescues us, by the powerful and victorious arm of Christ, from that wretched and accursed bondage.

30. He that is not with me. There are two ways of explaining this passage. Some suppose that it is an argument drawn from contraries, and that Christ's meaning is: "I cannot reign till the devil is overthrown; for the object of all his attempts is, to scatter whatever I gather." And certainly we see abundant evidence of the earnestness with which that enemy labors to destroy the kingdom of Christ. But I rather agree in opinion with those who explain it to denote, that the scribes are declared to be, in two respects, opposed to the kingdom of God, because they intentionally hinder its progress. "It was your duty to assist me, and to give me your hand in establishing the kingdom of God; for whoever does not assist is, in some measure, opposed to me, or, at least, deserves to be reckoned among enemies. What then shall be said of you, whose furious rage drives you into avowed opposition?" [126]

And he that gathereth not with me scattereth The truth of this is abundantly manifest from what has been already said; for so strong is our propensity to evil, that the justice of God can have no place but in those who apply to it in good earnest. This doctrine has a still more extensive bearing, and implies that they are unworthy to be considered as belonging to the flock of Christ, who do not apply to it all the means that are in their power; because their indolence tends to retard and ruin the kingdom of God, which all of us are called to advance.

31. Therefore I say to you. This inference ought not to be confined to the clause immediately preceding, but depends on the whole discourse. Having proved that the scribes could not blame him for casting out devils, without opposing the kingdom of God, he at length concludes that it is no light or ordinary offense, but an atrocious crime, knowingly and willingly to pour contempt on the Spirit of God.

We have already said, that Christ did not pronounce this decision on the mere words which they uttered, but on their base and wicked thought.

All sin and blasphemy. As our Lord declares blasphemy against the Holy Ghost to be more heinous than all other sins, it is of importance to inquire what is the meaning of that term. Those who define it to be impenitence [127] may be refuted without any difficulty; for it would have been in vain and to no purpose for Christ to say, that it is not forgiven in the present life. Besides, the word blasphemy cannot be extended indiscriminately to every sort of crimes; but from the comparison which Christ makes, we shall easily obtain the true definition. Why is it said that he who blasphemes against the Spirit is a more heinous sinner than he who blasphemes against Christ? Is it because the majesty of the Spirit is greater, that a crime committed against him must be punished with greater severity? Certainly that is not the reason; for as the fullness of the Godhead ([Colossians 2:9](#)) shines in Christ, he who pours contempt upon him overturns and destroys, as far as it lies in his power, the whole glory of God. Now in what manner shall Christ be separated from his Spirit, so that those who treat the Spirit with contempt offer no injury or insult to Christ?

Already we begin to perceive, that the reason why blasphemy against the Spirit exceeds other sins, is not that the Spirit is higher than Christ, but that those who rebel, after that the power of God has been revealed, cannot be excused on the plea of ignorance. Besides, it must be observed, that what is here said about blasphemy does not refer merely to the essence of the Spirit, but to the grace which He has bestowed upon us. Those who are destitute of the light of the Spirit, however much they may detract from the glory of the Spirit, will not be held guilty of this crime. [128] We do not maintain, that those persons are said to pour contempt on the Spirit of God, who oppose his grace and power by hardened malice; and farther we maintain, that this kind of sacrilege is committed only when we knowingly endeavor to extinguish the Spirit who dwells in us.

The reason why contempt is said to be poured on the Spirit, rather than on the Son or the Father, is this. By detracting from the grace and power of God, we make a direct attack on the Spirit, from whom they proceed, and in whom they are revealed to us. Shall any unbeliever curse God? It is as if a blind man were dashing against a wall. But no man curses the Spirit who is not enlightened by him, and conscious of ungodly rebellion against him; for it is not a superfluous distinction. that all other blasphemies shall be forgiven, except that one blasphemy which is directed against the Spirit. If a man shall simply blaspheme against God, he is not declared to be beyond the hope of pardon; but of those who have offered outrage to the Spirit, it is said that God will never forgive them. Why is this, but because those only are blasphemers against the Spirit, who slander his gifts and power, contrary to the conviction of their own mind? Such

also is the import of the reason assigned by Mark for the extreme severity of Christ's threatening against the Pharisees; because they had said that he had the unclean spirit; for in this manner they purposely and maliciously turned light into darkness; and, indeed, it is in the manner of the giants, [129] as the phrase is, to make war against God.

But here a question arises. Do men proceed to such a pitch of madness as not to hesitate, knowingly and willfully, to rush against God? for this appears to be monstrous and incredible. I:reply: Such audacity does indeed proceed from mad blindness, in which, at the same time, malice and virulent rage predominate. Nor is it without reason that Paul says, that though he was

a blasphemer, he obtained pardon, because he had done it ignorantly in his unbelief,
(1 Timothy 1:13;)

for this term draws a distinction between his sin and voluntary rebellion. This passage refutes also the error of those who imagine that every sin which is voluntary, or which is committed in opposition to the conscience, is unpardonable. On the contrary, Paul expressly limits that sin to the First Table of the Law; [130] and our Lord not less plainly applies the word blasphemy to a single description of sin, and at the same time shows, that it is of a kind which is directly opposed to the glory of God. [131]

From all that has been said, we may conclude that those persons sin and blaspheme against the Holy Spirit, who maliciously turn to his dishonor the perfections of God, which have been revealed to him by the Spirit, in which His glory ought to be celebrated, and who, with Satan, their leader, are avowed enemies of the glory of God. We need not then wonder, if for such sacrilege there is no hope of pardon; for they must be desperate who turn the only medicine of salvation into a deadly venom. Some consider this to be too harsh, and betake themselves to the childish expedient, that it is said to be unpardonable, because the pardon of it is rare and difficult to be obtained. But the words of Christ are too precise to admit of so silly an evasion. It is excessively foolish to argue that God will be cruel if he never pardon a sin, the atrocity of which ought to excite in us astonishment and horror. [132] Those who reason in that manner do not sufficiently consider what a monstrous crime it is, not only to profane intentionally the sacred name of God, but to spit in his face when he shines evidently before us. It shows equal ignorance to object, that it would be absurd if even repentance could not obtain pardon; for blasphemy against the Spirit is a token of reprobation, and hence it follows, that whoever have fallen into it, have been delivered over to a reprobate mind, (Romans 1:28.) As we maintain, that he who has been truly regenerated by the Spirit cannot

possibly fall into so horrid a crime, so, on the other hand, we must believe that those who have fallen into it never rise again; nay, that in this manner God punishes contempt of his grace, by hardening the hearts of the reprobate, so that they never have any desire towards repentance.

32. Neither in the present life What these words mean, Mark briefly explains by saying, that those who have spoken against the Spirit are exposed to eternal judgment Every day we ask from God the forgiveness of sins, and every day he reconciles us to Him; and, finally, at death, he takes away all our sins, and declares that he is gracious to us. The fruit of this mercy will appear at the last day. The meaning therefore is: -- "There is no reason to expect that those who shall have blasphemed against the Spirit will obtain pardon in this life, or will be acquitted in the last judgment."

With regard to the inference drawn by the Papists, that the sins of men are forgiven after death, there is no difficulty in refuting their slander. First, they act foolishly in torturing the expression, future life, to mean an intermediate period, while any one may perceive that it denotes "the last judgment." But it is likewise a proof of their dishonesty; for the objection which they sophistically urge is inconsistent with their own doctrine. Who knows not their distinction, that sins are freely pardoned in respect of guilt, but that punishment and satisfaction are demanded? This is an acknowledgment, that there is no hope of salvation to any one whose guilt is not pardoned before death. To the dead, therefore, there remains no forgiveness, except as regards punishment; and surely they will not venture to deny that the subject of this discourse is guilt. Let them now go and light their fire of purgatory with these cold materials, if ice can kindle a flame.
[133]

Footnotes:

[108] "Mais Iesus, cognoissant leurs pensees, leur dit;" -- "but Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said to them."

[109] "Parquoy iceux seront vos iuges;" -- "therefore they shall be your judges."

[110] "Toute sorte de peche et blaspheme;" -- "every description of sin and blasphemy."

[111] "Ains il prend fin;" -- "and so he comes to an end."

[112] "N'aura point de remission eternellement;" -- "will have no forgiveness eternally."

[113] "Il a l'esprit immonde;" -- "he hath the unclean spirit."

[114] "Mais luy cognoissant leurs pensees;" -- "but he knowing their thoughts."

[115] "Et toute' maison divisee' contre soy-mesme dechet;"-- "and every house divided against itself falleth."

[116] "Comme c'estoyent gens tout pleins d'un malin vouloir;" -- "as they were people entirely full of a wicked disposition."

[117] "Que Christ a cognu ce qui estoit cache dedans leur coeurs;" -- "that Christ knew what was concealed within their hearts."

[118] "Mais se laissent trop aisement transporter d'une temerite ne voyans pas le mal qu'ils font;" -- "but allow themselves too easily to be carried away by rashness, not perceiving the evil that they do."

[119] "Ce pere de toute finesse et malice;" -- "that father of all dexterity and malice."

[120] "Il ne va pas chercher fort loin les choses pour poindre les consciences de ses adversaires;" -- "he does not go far to see things fitted to affect the consciences of his adversaries."

[121] "Et cependant les scribes tenoyent Christ pour estranger;" -- "and yet the scribes held Christ to be a foreigner."

[122] "Le peuple en a fait un office ordinaire sans regarder comment;"-- "the people made it to be an ordinary office, without considering in what manner."

[123] "Car l'objection s'adresse a la personne, comme on dit, et non pas a la chose: c'est a dire, Christ ne regarde point ce qu'a la verite il falloir dire de ces Exorcistes, mais ce qu'en pensoient les scribes;" -- "for the objection is addressed to the person, as we say, and not to the thing: that is to say, Christ does not consider what in truth ought to be said of these Exorcists, but what the Jews thought of them."

[124] Harmony, volume 1 p.

[125] "Que c'est folie aux hommes d'attendre deliverance, si Satan n'est premierement mis bas en choquant a bon escient contre luy;" -- "that it is folly in men to expect deliverance, if Satan is not first put down by encountering him in good earnest."

[126] "A batailler ouvertement contre Dieu;" -- "to fight openly against God."

[127] "Quant a ceux qui disent que c'est un endurcissement jusqu'a la mort;" -- "as to those who say that it is hardened obstinacy even to death."

[128] "Ne seront pas toutesfois tenus coupables de ce grand crime duquel il est ici parle;" -- "will not, on that account, be held guilty of the great crime here spoken of."

[129] "Et cela c'est desfier Dieu, et luy faire la guerre, comme les Geans des Poetes, ainsique porte le proverbe Latin;" -- "and that is to defy God, and make war with him, like the Giants of the Poets, as the Latin proverb bears."

[130] "Restreint nommement a la Premiere Table de la Loy ce peche contre l'Esprit;" -- "expressly limits to the First Table of the Law this sin against the Spirit."

[131] "Que c'est un peche qui bataille directement contre la gloire de Dieu;" -- "that it is a sin which fights directly against the glory of God."

[132] "Veu que l'horreur d'iceluy nous devoit a tous faire dresser les cheveux en la teste;" -- "since the horror at it ought to have such an effect on all of us, as to make the hair stand on our head."

[133] "Voire s'il est possible de tant souffler la glace, qu'on la face flamber;" -- "that is, if it be possible to blow upon the ice in such a manner as to produce a flame."

Matthew 12:26

And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?

Matthew 12:27

And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges.

Matthew 12:28

But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

Matthew 12:29

Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.

Matthew 12:30

He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

Matthew 12:31

Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

Matthew 12:32

And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

Biblical Chiastic Arches

A chiasm is a literary device where ideas or words are repeated in reverse order (an A-B-B'-A' or mirror pattern) to highlight a central core point. Major examples in the Bible range from single-sentence sayings of Jesus to macro-structures spanning entire narrative blocks.

Notable Biblical Chiasms

- **The Noah's Ark Flood Narrative (Genesis 6:9–9:29):** A massive structural chiasm where the story mirrors itself around the pivotal center point: "And God remembered Noah" (Genesis 8:1), marking the transition from the rising waters to the receding waters.
- **The Sabbath Saying (Mark 2:27):**
 - A: The Sabbath
 - B: was made for man,
 - B': not man
 - A': for the Sabbath.
- **Exaltation and Humility (Matthew 23:12):**
 - A: Whoever exalts himself
 - B: will be humbled,
 - B': and whoever humbles himself
 - A': will be exalted.
- **The Book of Exodus Macro-Structure:** The layout of chapters examining the Tabernacle instructions, Sabbath commands, and the Golden Calf incident mirror each other to emphasize God's presence dwelling with His people.

Why Biblical Writers Used Chiasms

- **Memorization:** Acted as an oral memory aid before widespread text printing.
- **Focus:** Draws the reader's eye directly to the center "hinge" or turning point of the structure, which holds the primary theological meaning.

- **Aesthetic Balance:** Gives literary symmetry and artistic harmony to Hebrew and Greek prose.

The verse-by-verse breakdown of the Genesis Flood narrative reveals a meticulous, symmetrical design. Each point on the descent mirrors a point on the ascent, pivoting around a singular theological message. [1, 2]

The Genesis Flood Chiasm (Genesis 6:10–9:19)

The entire global event hinges upon a single sentence in **Genesis 8:1**: *"But God remembered Noah."*

- **A: Noah and his sons (6:10)**
 - **B: All flesh corrupted on earth (6:11–12)**
 - **C: Covenant pronounced with Noah (6:13–22)**
 - **D: Command to enter the ark (7:1–10)**
 - **E: The flood waters rise / 7 days waiting (7:11–16)**
 - **F: 40 days the waters increase (7:17–24)**
 - **G: 150 days waters prevail (7:24)**
 - 🎯 **CENTER: God remembers Noah (8:1)**
 - **G': 150 days waters abate (8:3)**
 - **F': 40 days of waiting (8:6)**
 - **E': Flood waters recede / 7 days waiting (8:10–12)**
 - **D': Command to leave the ark (8:15–19)**
 - **C': Covenant established with Noah (9:1–17)**
 - **B': All flesh multiplying on earth (9:18)**
- **A': Noah and his sons (9:19)**

Chiastic Structures in Mark

The Gospel of Mark uses "sandwich structures" (intercalations) and macro-chiasms to show how political and spiritual kingdoms collide.

1. Macro-Structure of Christ's Ministry (Mark 1–16)

The overall layout of Mark centers on Peter's confession of Christ, shifting the narrative from a ministry of power to a journey toward the cross.

- **A: The Authority of Jesus Manifested** (Miracles and teaching in Galilee, Ch. 1–7)

- **B: Opening Blind Eyes Physical / Spiritual** (Healing the blind man of Bethsaida, 8:22–26)
 - 🎯 **CENTER: Peter confesses Jesus as the Messiah / Christ's identity revealed (8:27–30)**
- **B': Opening Blind Eyes Physical / Spiritual** (Healing blind Bartimaeus, 10:46–52)
- **A': The Authority of Jesus Challenged**
(Suffering and crucifixion in Jerusalem, Ch. 11–16)

2. The Cleansing of the Temple (Mark 11:12–21)

Mark sandwiches the judgment of the temple inside the cursing of the fig tree to show that the temple system is dead.

- **A: Jesus curses the barren fig tree (11:12–14)**
 - 🎯 **CENTER: Jesus drives the moneychangers out of the corrupt temple (11:15–19)**
 - **A': The disciples see the fig tree withered from the roots (11:20–21)**
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Chiastic Structures in 1 John

First John is famously non-linear, cycling through themes like love, light, and truth. These cycles are bound together by clear chiasms.

1. Forgiveness and Fellowship (1 John 1:6–10)

John creates a mirror structure to emphasize the dual reality of walking in truth versus denying sin.

- **A: Claiming fellowship while walking in darkness makes us liars (1:6)**
 - **B: Walking in the light brings cleansing from all sin (1:7)**
 - 🎯 **CENTER: Claiming we have no sin is self-deception (1:8)**
 - **B': Confessing sin brings faithful forgiveness and cleansing (1:9)**
- **A': Claiming we have not sinned makes God out to be a liar (1:10)**

2. Cosmic Victory over the Wicked One (1 John 2:12–14)

John writes to three distinct generations of believers, reversing the order in the second stanza to show absolute unity in Christ.

- **A: Little children** — sins are forgiven (2:12)
 - **B: Fathers** — you know Him who is from the beginning (2:13a)
 - **C: Young men** — you have overcome the wicked one (2:13b)
- **A': Children** — you know the Father (2:14a)
 - **B': Fathers** — you know Him who is from the beginning (2:14b)
 - **C': Young men** — you are strong, Word abides, overcome the wicked one (2:14c)

Chiastic Structures in the Psalms

The Psalms use poetic chiasms to shift the emotional weight of a prayer, always placing the ultimate source of hope or comfort at the exact center.

1. Psalm 23 (The Divine Shepherd)

David structures this famous psalm around a massive shift in perspective. In the first half, he talks *about* God ("He"); in the second half, he talks *directly to* God ("You"). The turning point is the reality of God's presence in life's darkest moments.

- **A: God is the Shepherd who provides** (v. 1)
 - **B: Peaceful green pastures and still waters** (v. 2)
 - **C: Guidance in paths of righteousness for His name's sake** (v. 3)
 - 🎯 **CENTER: "For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me"** (v. 4)
 - **C': Preparation of a table in the presence of enemies** (v. 5a)
 - **B': Overflowing cup and anointed head with oil** (v. 5b)
- **A': God is the Host who pursues with goodness and mercy forever** (v. 6)

2. Psalm 51 (David's Confession)

Written after his sin with Bathsheba, David's prayer moves from a desperate plea for personal cleansing to a desire for national restoration. The pivot centers on a profound spiritual truth: God desires inward reality over outward rituals.

- **A: Appeal for mercy and blotting out of transgressions** (v. 1–2)
 - **B: Sin acknowledged before God alone** (v. 3–6)
 - **C: Prayer for personal cleansing and a clean heart** (v. 7–12)
 - 🎯 **CENTER: God delivers from guilt; the tongue sings of righteousness** (v. 13–15)
 - **C': True sacrifice is a broken spirit, not animals** (v. 16–17)
 - **B': Prayer for Zion's collective prosperity and walls** (v. 18)
- **A': Offering of right sacrifices on the altar** (v. 19)

Chiastic Structures in Isaiah

Prophetic chiasms often frame a divine commission, contrasting the holiness of God with the spiritual state of humanity.

Isaiah 6 (The Call of the Prophet)

Isaiah's vision in the temple is perfectly balanced. It moves from the heavenly realm down to the earthly reality, focusing on the radical purification required to speak for God.

- **A: Vision of Yahweh exalted on His throne in the temple** (v. 1)
 - **B: The Seraphim cry out: "Holy, holy, holy"** (v. 2–3)
 - **C: The foundations shake and the house fills with smoke** (v. 4)
 - **D: Isaiah's despair: "Woe is me! I am undone!"** (v. 5)
 - 🎯 **CENTER: A live coal from the altar purifies Isaiah's lips and removes sin** (v. 6–7)
 - **D': Isaiah's willingness: "Here am I! Send me!"** (v. 8)
 - **C': The spiritual hardening and blindness of the people** (v. 9–10)
 - **B': Isaiah asks: "Lord, how long?"** (v. 11a)
- **A': Reality of the earthly realm: Desolation, exile, and the holy seed** (v. 11b–13)

Both Amos and Job rely heavily on complex chiastic structures. For Amos, the device highlights divine judgment and eventual restoration. For Job, it structures a sprawling philosophical debate on human suffering. [1]

Chiastic Structures in Amos

The prophet Amos uses a concentric ring structure to deliver his fierce message against Israel's social injustice and empty religious rituals.

1. Macro-Structure of the Book (Amos 1–9)

The entire book is framed as a series of concentric circles closing in on Israel, shifting from global judgment to intimate national restoration.

- **A: Judgments on neighboring Gentile nations** (1:3–2:3)
 - **B: Judgments on Judah and Israel** (2:4–16)
 - **C: Three sermons of warning and condemnation** (3:1–6:14)
 - 🎯 **CENTER: Five visions of absolute doom and collapse** (7:1–9:4)
 - **C': The inescapable nature of divine judgment** (9:5–6)
 - **B': The destruction of the sinful kingdom** (9:7–10)
- **A': Global restoration of the tent of David and the earth** (9:11–15)

2. The Centerpiece Lament (Amos 5:1–17)

Within his sermons, Amos places a strict literary mirror to deliver his most famous exhortation: *"Seek me and live."* [1]

- **A: Lament over fallen Israel** (5:1–3)
 - **B: Exhortation to seek the Lord, not false altars** (5:4–6)
 - **C: Accusation of legal corruption and injustice** (5:7)
 - **D: Hymn praising Yahweh, Creator of the stars** (5:8–9)
 - 🎯 **CENTER: The crimes of the wealthy crushing the poor** (5:10–13)

- D': Exhortation to love good and establish justice (5:14–15)
 - C': Reiteration of legal corruption and collapse (5:16)
 - B': Prediction of judgment on false places of worship (5:16)
 - A': National mourning and wailing in the streets (5:17)
-

Chiastic Structures in Job

The Book of Job is a massive literary masterpiece. Its macro-structure is perfectly balanced, while its central dialogue utilizes a complex multi-layered cycle to track Job's descent and vindication.

1. The Macro-Structure of the Whole Book (Job 1–42)

The book sandwiches a lengthy poetic debate inside a simple, symmetric prose narrative.

- A: Prologue on Earth: Job's immense wealth, family, and piety (1:1–5)
 - B: Prologue in Heaven: Satan challenges God; Job loses everything (1:6–2:13)
 - C: Job's Opening Curse: Job laments his birth and wishes for death (3:1–26)
 - D: The Three Dialogues: Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar debate Job (4:1–27:23)
 - 🎯 CENTER: The Poem on Divine Wisdom: Humans cannot find it (28:1–28)
 - D': Job's Final Defense: Job calls for a verdict from God (29:1–31:40)
 - C': Elihu's Monologues: A youth steps in to defend God's justice (32:1–37:24)
 - B': Yahweh's Speech from the Whirlwind: God silences Job (38:1–42:6)
- A': Epilogue on Earth: Job's family, health, and double wealth restored (42:7–17)

2. Job's Final Appeal (Job 29–31)

Just before God speaks, Job delivers a localized chiasm tracking his loss of status, moving from his glorious past to his miserable present, and finally to his integrity.

- A: Job remembers his past glory, honor, and community respect (Ch. 29)
 - 🎯 CENTER: Job laments his present misery, mockery, and intense pain (Ch. 30)
 - A': Job swears his legal oath of innocence, listing his pure morals (Ch. 31)
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JONAH's Chiasms...

The Book of Jonah is an artistic masterpiece built around a perfect parallel structure. The entire book is split into two halves that mirror each other exactly: **Chapters 1–2 (Jonah's first commission)** and **Chapters 3–4 (Jonah's second commission)**. When you zoom out, the overall narrative forms a brilliant macro-chiasm that exposes the contrast between the repentance of the pagan world and the stubbornness of God's prophet.

The Macro-Structure of Jonah (Chapters 1–4)

The narrative acts as a mirror where Jonah's flight away from God in the first half matches his angry confrontation *with* God in the second half.

- **A: Jonah's First Commission & Rebellion** — God commands, Jonah flees to Tarshish (1:1–3)
 - **B: The Pagan Sailors** — Pagan mariners cry out to their gods, show mercy to Jonah, and eventually fear and sacrifice to Yahweh (1:4–16)
 - **C: Jonah's Sanctuary / Punishment** — Jonah is swallowed by the great fish (1:17)
 - 🎯 **CENTER: Jonah's Prayer of Thanksgiving** — Jonah prays from the belly of the fish, acknowledging that "Salvation belongs to the Lord" (2:1–9)
 - **C': Jonah's Deliverance** — The fish vomits Jonah out onto dry land (2:10)
 - **B': The Pagan Ninevites** — God commands a second time; Nineveh listens, repents in sackcloth and ashes, and Yahweh shows them mercy (3:1–10)
 - **A': Jonah's Second Rebellion & Anger** — Jonah is furious at God's mercy; God confronts Jonah's bitter heart using a plant and a worm (4:1–11)
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The Micro-Chiasms Within the Story

Beyond the grand arc, individual chapters are packed with tight, poetic chiasms. Two of the most striking examples are Jonah's descent onto the ship and his prayer from the deep.

1. The Downward Spiral (Jonah 1:3–5)

Hebrew narrative uses grammatical mirrors to emphasize Jonah's literal and spiritual "going down" away from the presence of God.

- **A: Jonah rises to flee** to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord (1:3a)
 - **B: He goes down to Joppa** and finds a ship (1:3b)
 - **C: He pays the fare and goes down into the ship** (1:3c)

- 🎯 **CENTER: The Lord hurls a great wind; the ship threatens to break up (1:4)**
- **C': The mariners are afraid** and hurl the cargo into the sea (1:5a)
 - **B': Jonah goes down into the inner part of the ship** to lie down (1:5b)
- **A': Jonah falls fast asleep** in the depths of the boat (1:5c)

2. The Prayer in the Deep (Jonah 2:2–7)

Jonah's poetic prayer inside the fish uses a chiasm to mark the exact micro-second his soul shifted from drowning to being rescued.

- **A: I called out to the Lord** out of my distress, and He answered me (2:2)
 - **B: You cast me into the deep**, into the heart of the seas (2:3)
 - **C: The waters closed over me** to take my life; the deep surrounded me (2:5)
 - 🎯 **CENTER: I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever (2:6a)**
 - **C': Yet You brought up my life from the pit**, O Lord my God (2:6b)
 - **B': When my life was fainting away**, I remembered the Lord (2:7a)
- **A': My prayer came to You**, into Your holy temple (2:7b)

💡 The Theological Purpose

By placing **Jonah's prayer of deliverance (Ch. 2)** and **Nineveh's deliverance (Ch. 3)** side-by-side in the center of the book, the author forces a radical realization: **Jonah and the pagan Ninevites are exactly the same**. Both were doomed, both cried out from the depths of despair, and both were saved purely by the undeserved grace of God.