The Holy Spirit

Sins Against the Spirit Lesson 6

Introduction: (1) The Holy Spirit is a being, a personality who feels and demonstrates emotions. The Scriptures teach us that the Holy Spirit recognizes "slights and injuries" which may be attributed to a person.

(2) It was by the Holy Spirit that Jesus was empowered to perform miracles. The Spirit has been responsible for the revelation of both the Old and the New Testaments.

(3) In this lesson we will consider what the Scriptures say regarding sinning against the Holy Spirit; blasphemy against the Holy Spirit in particular.

I. The Background of Matthew 12:27-27.

A. Jesus was casting out demons. The Pharisees charged Him with acting by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of demons. Jesus replied with two illustrations:

1. A kingdom or house divided cannot stand (v. 25). Satan would be fighting himself.

2. You are inconsistent, because you accept that your sons cast out demons (v. 27).

B. Jesus performed miracles by the Spirit of God (v. 28), the finger of God (Luke 11:20). This means that the Spirit is the power by whom God acts.

C. By casting out demons, Jesus is binding the strong man (Satan) (v. 29).

II. The Blasphemy Against the Spirit

A. Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven (assuming one meets the conditions of forgiveness). Blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven (v. 31).

1. Blasphemy is "language irreverent or hostile to God, blasphemy, irreverence in speech" (Zerwick, A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament, I:38).

2. Blasphemy is very near to a curse. "In the New Testament this group of words (blasphemeo) almost always refer directly or indirectly to an attitude toward God" (H. Wahrisch, C. Brown, The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, III:340).

B. Speaking a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven (v. 32)

C. Speaking against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven - "neither in this world (age), nor in the world (age) to come" (v. 32).

1. World = age (Gk. aeon).

2. "This world" most likely refers to the Jewish age, the age in which Jesus and the people of Matthew chapter 12 were living.

3. "The world to come" most likely refers to the Christian age.

4. To take the position that "the world to come" refers to life after death is to accept the Roman Catholic argument for Purgatory.

(a) They argue the "world to come" means life after death, or purgatory, during which time some sins will be forgiven, and some will not.

(b) But the case of the rich man shows that no sins are forgiven after death (Luke 16).

III. Some Other Teachings Regarding the Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit

A. One teaching holds that the unpardonable sin is simply going through life and dying in sin without obeying the gospel.

1. This teaching denies that the sin could be committed before Pentecost.

2. If failing to obey the gospel is the unpardonable sin, then one can be forgiven of all other sins without obeying the gospel because Jesus said, "every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven" (Matthew 12:31).

3. Failing to obey the gospel is no more blasphemy against the Spirit than it is against the Father or the Son.

(a) "the gospel of God" (Romans 1:1).

(b) "the gospel of Christ" (Romans 1:16).

4. The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is a sin that is directed against the Spirit.

(a) The Pharisees admitted that Jesus performed the miracle, thus they did not speak against Him.

(b) They denied that He did it by the Spirit of God, but said He did it by an unclean spirit; thus speaking directly against the Holy Spirit.

5. Furthermore, if rejecting the gospel is the unpardonable sin, then if a person ever rejects it once, it would seem they can never be forgiven, even if they obey it the very next day.

6. In the case of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit a person has:

(a) Rejected the power of God, attributing it to Satan, etc.

(b) Rejected the evidence which convicts of sin, etc.

7. Is it possible for us to tell when a person has committed the sin against the Holy Spirit?

(a) No! God is the judge. We must keep on preaching to those who will listen. Those who refuse to listen are at least on their way to committing the blasphemy against the Spirit. Consider those who stoned Stephen (Acts 7:51).

(b) Basically this is a warning against rejecting the evidence presented by the Spirit. J.W. McGarvey says: "Blasphemy against the Son may be a temporary sin, for the one who commits it may be subsequently convinced of his error by the testimony of the Holy Spirit and become a believer (I Tim 1:13). But blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is in its nature an eternal sin, for if one rejects the only evidence upon which faith can be based; and without faith there is no forgiveness..." (The Fourfold Gospel, p. 303).

IV. Other Sins Against the Spirit.

A. A person can grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30).

B. A person can lie to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1-11).

C. A person can resist the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51-53)

D. A person can defile the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 3:16-17).

E. A person can despise the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 10:26-29).

F. A person can quench the Spirit (I Thessalonians 5:14-19)