

Afraid I Committed The Unpardonable Sin

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Tim: Ok. Well, tonight, now that we've started these APT sessions again, rather than simply going in and looking at many of the emails that James has sent me, I wanted to take tonight and deal with two subject matters that in my estimation - I could be wrong about this, James might know better, but in my estimation, probably two of the most trafficked videos that we ever get have to do with two types of sin: one is the unpardonable sin and one is sexual sin. Do a video on either one of those things, throw it on YouTube, and it is likely going to get tens of thousands of hits. And as emails come in, inevitably, people have questions. James just sent me one I think today or yesterday that has to do with sexual sin. Probably not long before that it seems like I've got a couple that have something to do with the unpardonable sin in one way or another. So, because it does get so much traffic, I think it's worth revisiting. Obviously, people have questions. Obviously, people have concerns. Obviously, there are spiritual battles being waged in both of these departments, both of these categories. So, I want to talk about this tonight.

The unpardonable sin. Let's go to our Bibles. Matthew 12 Let's just come up to speed. Undoubtedly, Matthew has the most extensive treatment of this. Luke just kind of says something in passing. Mark deals with it a little bit more than Luke. Maybe considerably more than Luke. Mark has some details that Matthew does not have. So we're going to read just a little bit from Mark as well, but let's get a feel for this. The unpardonable sin.

Matthew 12:22 Let's pick up right there. "Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to Christ, and He healed him, so that the man spoke and saw." Now, what's interesting right there, just for the sake of comment. The demons were obviously - demon singular or plural, however many there were - the demon caused physical blindness and deafness. Blind and mute. It's interesting. The man wasn't just incapacitated physically. He wasn't just sick or born defective somehow. Broken. Specifically, we're told, there's demons here. This is not the only place where demons bring on something of a physical illness or a physical aberration of some kind. And so, brought to Christ. "He healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, 'Can this be the Son of David?'" Son of David is an accepted title 2,000 years ago for the Messiah. That's what they're asking. Is this the Messiah? Well, the Pharisees heard the people. Now you have to remember, the Pharisees are driven by the congratulations of men; the glory of man. They like applause. They like attention. They like to be seen as the great praying people; the great giving people, and they would draw attention to that. They don't like it - you remember what Pilate said. He knew it was for envy that they wanted to put Christ to death. They were envious. They did not like when Jesus got the attention that they felt like they alone should have and deserved.

And that was one of the things, Jesus came along and He wasn't congratulating them and patting them on the back and telling them how good they did. They really figured that when the Messiah came, He would know them for who they were, and they thought very highly of

themselves. So they said, "it's only by Beelzebul..." Now, you might have heard me recently - Baal. "Baal is lord." I know it's a little bit different here, but that's basically what it is. It's Beelzebul. Or Beelzebub. And it seems like it refers to the "lord of the flies." The prince of demons. So it's a title that had been given to the devil himself. (incomplete thought) They're not denying that [Jesus] cast out demons. It seems that they recognize that the blindness, the muteness of this guy was related to demons. They're not questioning whether or not He did it. They're just saying He did it by the devil - the prince of demons, "that this man casts out demons. Knowing their thoughts, He said to them..." Here He's just going to explain why their theory can't be true. "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste. No city or house divided against itself will stand." Obviously, what He is saying is that if Satan casts out Satan, his house is divided. It will never stand. You never fight against yourself in a battle, in other words. "If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will this kingdom stand?" We're in Matthew 12. So, Matthew 12:27, "and if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore, they will be your judges. But if it is by the Spirit of God..." And of course, that's Who it was by. "...that I cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can someone enter a strongman's house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strongman? Then, indeed, he may plunder his house." Basically, what He's saying is there must be a power greater than Satan's at work here. For Satan to actually be giving up his goods means that the strongman is being bound. "Whoever is not with Me is against Me." He basically lays down this spiritual warfare. You're either for Him or you're against Him. "Whoever does not gather with Me scatters. Therefore, I tell you, every sin and blasphemy..."

Now He shifts here. He's moving towards this unpardonable sin. He says, "every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven." There it is. It's an unpardonable sin. It will not be forgiven. "Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven. But whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come." Now, just for a bit of clarification let's run over to Mark 3. Mark gives us just a few details that Matthew does not include, which are assumed in Matthew, but they're very pointedly stated here in Mark. Mark 3:28 Same account. Mark just gives us his viewpoint of it. "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter." Same truth that Matthew said. "But, whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, never has forgiveness." Now here's where we get the extra detail here. "...but is guilty of an eternal sin." Here, Mark specifically states what the sin is. It's assumed over in Matthew, but here he says it. "For, they were saying, 'he has an unclean spirit.'"

So, there you see it. You have a sin that is an eternal sin. He's saying, look, there's all manner of sins. They'll be forgiven. It's interesting. We can really, I guess, get stretched when we start to think, what? "Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man..." In other words, against Jesus Christ. "He'll be forgiven. Whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven." I mean, what's going on here? Why this? Well, that's probably too much to deal with tonight. But I will say this, that when we look at some other places, namely Hebrews, you will find that the actual sins that outrage the Spirit are connected with Christ. They are connected with His covenant, His blood, His sacrifice. They are connected with that. So, I don't want to spend a bunch of time

here. But what I do want to focus on is this. There is a sin that is an eternal sin that Jesus plainly says you cannot be forgiven for. And He specifically says - Mark says, that He is specifically says it's an eternal sin. What sin was it? They were saying He has an unclean spirit. And what kind of spirit did He actually have? A very clean Spirit - He had the Holy Spirit. That's His argument here. He's doing this by the Spirit of God. He's not doing this by Beelzebul. He's not doing this by the prince of the demons. He's doing this by the Spirit. They blasphemed the Spirit. It doesn't say whether they had crossed the line. It doesn't say whether they were unpardonable. (incomplete thought)

We know this. They were doing the very thing that He's telling them cannot be forgiven. Had they crossed the line? Perhaps. Probably. I mean they were doing the very thing that He said that there's never forgiveness for. Is it likely they had crossed the line? Very likely. I mean, He's warning them. Is it possible that He's warning them because they're getting real close, but haven't yet? Perhaps some of them. There's more than one person. They're obviously at different places. But, anyway, the issue is there is a sin that if you commit, you can't be forgiven. In other words, there is a sin you can commit in this life that you now cannot be saved. It is possible for you to do something in this life that that's it. It's all over. There's no hope. There's no chance of ever being saved now. You've crossed the line of the point of no return. That's what He's saying. Clearly.

I don't think anybody has a problem here. Now, I went on YouTube, and real close - you just do a search on the unpardonable sin on YouTube and within like the top ten videos that come up, you will find this one. "You have not committed the unpardonable sin. Come to Jesus and be saved." Well, ok.

Now, let's just think here. I come across that. What would you all do if you met somebody? Let's say we decide, ok, next Tuesday, we're not going to meet here and have the Bible study. Next Tuesday, we're all going to gather together at 4:00 in the afternoon and we're going to go door-to-door. We're going to knock on doors and we're going to talk to people about the Gospel. And let's say, we're going up and down the streets next Tuesday, and you come across somebody and they tell you that they believe they've committed the unpardonable sin. How many of you would tell them, no, you haven't? Is there anybody that would be inclined to say that to them? Come on, you can be honest.

James: I would talk to them. Gather data.

Tim: You'd want more information.

James: Then, I wouldn't dogmatically say well, no you haven't, but there's a place that if I discern they're in total despair and the devil is slandering God's character to them, I may, if the case fits, encourage them that it doesn't appear that you have. It appears that your real issue is fill in the blank.

Tim: But you notice what James said. He's looking for more information. The first thing that comes out of his mouth is not, "No, you haven't." He wants to know more information. Why? Because it is within the realm of possibility in James' mind, that they could have. There are many who would say, you can't even commit the unpardonable sin today. Anybody heard that? You're nodding yes. Anybody else heard that? On what basis? Do you ever hear the basis upon which that statement is made? (unintelligible) The grace of God.

(from the room) I think my understanding was that because the Holy Spirit isn't here physically, we can't sin against Him.

Tim: That who isn't?

(from the room) The Holy Spirit isn't here on this earth physically, and so you can't blaspheme Him is my understanding.

Tim: If the Holy Spirit isn't here physically, you can't blaspheme Him? But don't you get the feeling that Jesus is saying that the possibility of committing it is very real, even though the Spirit wasn't there physically back then either? In fact, a physical manifestation of a spirit - we're probably dealing with apples and oranges there. The Spirit is just as real in the world today as He was back then. The Spirit of God by which Jesus did what He did - if anybody casts out demons today, it's by the same Spirit. Certainly the Spirit of God was poured out upon the church. We see repeated manifestation and repeated Scripture that indicates that the Spirit of God is very much active in the world today. The Spirit of God is convicting men of sin and righteousness and judgment. The Spirit of God is very much active in the world. The Spirit of God is very much active in regenerating men. The same truth that was spoken to Nicodemus is very alive and real today. The Spirit of God causes men to be born again.

Actually, the argument that I've heard is that it's impossible to commit that sin today because Jesus isn't here any longer in bodily fashion. But see, I don't know what that has to do with the argument, because here's the thing - we have this account recorded for us in Scripture. What if somebody sees what Jesus was doing back then and comes to the same conclusion that the Pharisees did? Does it somehow negate the offense simply because Jesus isn't here? They're basically saying the same thing about the Spirit of God. Here's probably the bigger, I think just the bigger picture, is that when you move out of the Gospels, and you move into the epistles, you actually have a sin which is unto death. Anybody know where that is? 1 John 5 We also have the reality that there is a point of no return. If somebody has once been exposed to the truth; if they have once been enlightened; they have once tasted of a heavenly gift; they've been partakers of the Spirit of God. They've tasted of the goodness of the good word and of the power of the age to come. If that happens, and people turn from that, it's impossible for them to ever be renewed unto repentance.

Or, you go over to Hebrews 10:26-29, what do you have there? If we go on sinning willfully after coming to a knowledge of the truth, what is there? Nothing but an expectation of judgment. A

fury of fire, Scripture says. You know what it is? Back under Moses, if you willfully sinned then; you willfully broke those things under the witness of two or three, you were put to death. And then it says how much sorer punishment... What do you think is going to happen now if you trample under foot the blood of Christ? You put Him to open shame and outrage the Spirit. You see, the Spirit is outraged. The Spirit is involved in these two. You think of Hebrews 6. It is partaking of the Spirit. That has happened. And there's a rejection. You think of chapter 10, and you have the Spirit which is being outraged because there is this trampling.

Listen, in both cases, there's no hope. If you take up the text, there's a sin unto death. And John is saying to us, I'm not saying you should pray about that. In other words, he was really believing that the people he was writing to would have some idea about: there is a sin. Listen, aren't the wages of all sin death? Why in the world would he talk about a sin unto death? Doesn't all sin lead to death? Well, what he's obviously talking about is there is sin we can commit and yes, it's a death sentence, but we can be saved. Christ took the penalty in our place and suffered our death in our behalf. What's he talking about a sin unto death? In other words, there's a sin that once you commit it, it's the death sentence. There's other sins that are not unto death, which means there are sins that a person can commit and be forgiven of, and there is a sin or sins that you can commit, and you will never be forgiven of. That is a sin unto death.

So, my whole point is this: To simply explain away or try to explain away the unpardonable sin because Jesus Christ isn't here any longer, I don't think works for several reasons. One being that the very thing that they did back then, we can do today. We could look at Jesus healing this very man and say, I don't think He did it by the Holy Spirit; I think He did it by fill in the blank. You could do the very same thing they did back then. So how would it change any just because Jesus isn't here any longer? You see, the thing is, what's true in all of these it seems is that people are exposed with a tremendous amount of light, and they turn their back on it. Very, very dangerous. (incomplete thought) And one of the other things, I think, is there's no indication from the text that we should be led to believe that somehow it's going to come to an end. Somehow it won't be possible in the future.

Here's a thought that I had. Why would Jesus tell us about this sin if it wasn't for today? There's a lot of things Jesus said that weren't recorded for us. John tells us that. John tells us if everything was written concerning Him, it would fill more books than the world can contain. We didn't get everything recorded for us. If this was only for them, why would it be recorded for us? Because it's a snare to a lot of people. Why would God uselessly throw a snare at us? I believe that the reason He gave it to us is because we need to take due warning. Because we can commit it. Now, it's true, a lot of people get snared by it. But I believe that the reason that God would throw this out there even though many people are going to be ensnared by it is because it's a legitimate risk. It's a legitimate sin. It's a legitimate danger to us today. I have a feeling people pass this line far more than we know. I have a feeling people do things and say things that outrage the Spirit. And most people probably are blind to what the fruit of the Spirit being outraged really is. There's not a bolt of lightning and thunder. It's something else. It's actually something that to the person it happens to, it's probably imperceptible. It's probably a hardening.

It's probably the Spirit taking His hand back and just not even allowing a person to come under conviction anymore or be sensitive to their sin. It's probably a deadening. It would be kind of like having the nerves in your fingers become calloused. You know, you work and you work and you work, and your hands become more and more calloused, and you feel less and less. It's probably like that. It's almost imperceptible to the person it's happening to.

Here's the thing about it. It opens people up to Satanic deception. Why? As soon as your brain cognitively grasps: Oh, there's a sin I can commit that's unto death. There's a sin I can commit that it's impossible for me to be renewed, restored unto repentance. There's a sin I can commit, there's nothing but fiery fury, wrath, judgment to look forward to. There's a sin I can commit, and it's an eternal sin. You see, your mind grabs hold on that truth. The devil can come in and say, you did it. You committed it. And if you look historically, you will find all manner of people who have had that happen. It happened to me. It happened to Bunyan. You read historically about different people as they're coming under conviction, or when they're first saved, or people who they have some major fall into sin. And the devil's right there to say, that's it. You did it. There's no hope now. You're all done. You've passed over the line. Let's ask this. James said that if he went to somebody's door and they thought that they had committed the unpardonable sin, he would question them. And he's looking for something that would be a giveaway as to whether they had actually committed it, or whether he felt like maybe they were being attacked by Satan and they were under some kind of barrage, spiritual assault, that they actually need to be delivered from. How are we going to tell the difference? Or is it even necessary that we tell the difference?

James: It's definitely not always necessary because where in the Bible does it command you to look inwardly and determine if you've committed the unpardonable sin or not? But we do know there's clear commands in the Bible that call men to repent and come to Christ.

Tim: That's the issue right there. (incomplete thought) See, this is critical. Because undoubtedly, some of you are going to deal with folks like this. Or you may be under the attack yourself at some point. You see, the issue is this: I think one of the foundational texts that you would want to confront this situation with - who can quote John 6:37? All that the Father gives to Me - anybody know it? ...shall come to Me. And him that comes to Me, I will in no wise (that's KJV)... no way cast out. Now, we don't want to get hung up with the first part of that. I mean, look, Jesus is basically giving us both sides of this reality. All that the Father gives to Christ, will come. Guaranteed. Whoever comes, He won't cast out. What a beautiful truth. What a beautiful fullness of the picture. But you see, what we want to emphasize with people who are in this situation is this very truth. This truth can help you in all manner of situations. It can help you in your own walk. It can help you when Satan barrages you with all manner of temptation. Listen, Jesus says this: Whoever comes to Me, I will not in any way turn them away. You see, that's the truth. Now, let me ask you something. When you take that truth - let's take that truth. Think about that truth. Jesus is saying this. Whoever comes to Me, I'm not going to cast them out. I will receive whoever comes to Me.

So, let me ask this. (incomplete thought) Let's take both truths. There is an unpardonable sin. Jesus says anybody that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out. Let's take both those truths. Put them together. Give me some obvious conclusions with both those truths. There is an unpardonable sin. There is a sin unto death. There is a point of no return. There is a place where a person who has once been enlightened; a person who has once tasted and partaken of all this stuff, cannot be renewed unto repentance. There is a place where a person presses on in sin. They trample underneath this blood of the new covenant by which they've been sanctified. There's nothing but a fearful looking forward of judgment. Whoever comes to Christ will never be cast out. Take those two truths. What are some absolutely necessary conclusions? How about this? What if somebody who has committed the unpardonable sin goes to Christ?

(from the room) They wouldn't though. That is the obvious conclusion, right?

Tim: I mean, you take both truths. There is a point of no return. Yet, if a person goes to Christ, He'll not turn them away. You see the obvious conclusion is this: That if somebody will go, they haven't committed it. The obvious conclusion is this: there is nobody who goes to Christ who has committed it. Right? Is that not safe to say? Can we not all say that? Can we? Yes, absolutely! Of course! There can be nobody going to Christ who has committed the unpardonable sin. Because He says if you come to me, I will not cast you out. And so if they've committed the unpardonable sin, and they came to Him, we've got a contradiction in Scripture. Because one of the two has to give way. Right? And they can't. Both are true. This is an unpardonable sin. And all that go to Christ, He will receive. Which tells you this: The very nature of the unpardonable sin is that the Spirit is outraged. The Spirit so operates after that as to never draw that individual to Christ. You see, it's not a flash of lightning and a blast of thunder. It's almost imperceptible. You cross the line and the Spirit just says, I'm done with him. I will never call him to repentance. I will never convict him of sin. I will never give him hope in the promises of God.

So, here's the thing. Let me ask you this. The guy who says to you they've committed the unpardonable sin - just like the Pharisees there, even though they're doing the very thing that He's warning them about, is He warning them because they've already crossed the line? Or is He warning them so that they don't cross the line? Or have some of them crossed it and He's giving the warning so that others who might be tempted or be close, don't cross it? You know, the reality is when somebody tells you they've committed the unpardonable sin, you don't know. They don't know. God knows. But you don't know. But you know what you do know? What do you know? If they go to Christ, He'll never cast them out. And see, that's what we have to lock in on. Satan uses this to torment people. And it's almost like people can't even hear you when you talk this way.

And you know what? Sometimes maybe the reason they can't is because the Spirit won't give them ears to hear. And I'll tell you this, somebody who believes they've committed the unpardonable sin, whether they have or have not, but if they keep on in that vein of thought, feeling everything is hopeless and they will not go to Christ, whether they've committed it or not,

they're dead men. Because bottom line, they have to go to Christ. They have no other hope but to go to Christ. That is the only hope. That's where we've got to direct them. That's where we've got to point them. We've got to press them, call upon Him. Call upon Him. Because they don't know. They fear they've committed it. See, the thing is, when Satan - Satan can so scream in our ears that it's like all that noise, all that racket, that's all we hear: You've committed the unpardonable sin. You've committed the unpardonable sin. You know what? When I was first saved, I had this idea: I'm blaspheming the Spirit if I allowed a blasphemous thought concerning the Spirit into my head. If I even thought the thought. And I can remember as a young Christian, I was literally on the floor, on my knees, with my head against the wall, trying not to think this thought. And then, I thought it. And it's like I'm all done. And the devil was right there. See, you've committed it. There's no hope. But I ran back to Christ. And it went away. You read Bunyan. Anybody know anybody else? Have any of you experienced having thought you committed the unpardonable sin?

James: David Brainard

Tim: Brainard did? Anybody else? None of you have?

(from the room) I thought that it was ... if I were to think that - if I were to say something blasphemous against the Spirit, (unintelligible) ...but you probably didn't, because you've come to repentance.

Tim: Here's what we know. Jesus was healing people right in front of the eyeballs of these spiritual leaders - these Jewish leaders. And they said, it's the devil. They had such light set right before them. And they rejected that light. Now, whether you want to accept that it's the same exact sin - the sin unto death. Or the same exact sin with no longer being the possibility of being renewed to repentance (Hebrews 6) or the only thing left now is this expectation of judgment (Hebrews 10). Whether you want to say that that's the exact same thing or not, what we do know is this. In all of them, you think of Hebrews 10 - you've come to a knowledge of truth. And what do you do? You turn your back. You go on willfully sinning. This is the issue over in Hebrews 6. You've had all this enlightenment; all this partaking; all this tasting... and you turn and you walk away. See, that's the issue.

And by the way, you have to take all of 1 John together. The sin unto death? He's already been talking for five chapters. If you look at the context there, and who the people are in the church who are rejecting the light - they're those who went out from among us. They proved they were not of us. They basically were confronted by the truth of Jesus Christ, and they turned their back and they walked away. That's what he's talking about there. He's saying, look, I want you praying for one another if you fall into sin - sin that's not unto death. But you guys know about the sin which is unto death.

You say, give me some context. Well, let's look at the whole book of 1 John. It's those who went out from us. It's the antichrists basically. It's those individuals who are opposed to Christ. And

what were they doing? They were denying certain fundamental realities about Christ. They're being confronted by these truths and they reject them. They reject the light that they have of Christ. That is what is significant about all of these realities. There's a coming face-to-face with great amounts of light. And let me tell you something, People like the people who attend our church are in the greatest danger of this. The more light you're exposed to, the greater the danger is. People can reach points of no return. It's a very serious matter. We don't want to undermine - I would never want to do a video: "You have not committed the unpardonable sin." That would be rejecting Scripture. But you see where they went with it. You have not. Come to Christ and be saved. Well, I didn't go and watch it, but they're probably on the right track. That's basically what we're talking about. Come unto Christ. He'll never reject you. He'll never turn you away. He'll in no wise cast you out.

I would say this, you may have. Run to Christ anyways. You say, isn't that a contradiction? Well, of course, if you want to press it. But they don't know and you don't know. It's like even if you've committed it, run to Christ! Because they think they've committed it. It's like, what are you going to do? Are you going to stand there thinking you've committed it when you really don't know and you're just going to stand still and not run to Christ? That's certain death! Run to Christ! Go to Christ. Many of you know this. I'll just say this before we go on to the next sin that I want to talk about.

But, this is the account from Pilgrim's Progress. Bunyan was tempted to believe he committed it. You'll see that Bunyan obviously believed that it was a sin that people can still fall into. This is from Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. "The man in the iron cage." Just listen. "He (this is the character Interpreter)... Interpreter took Christian by the hand again, and led him into a very dark room where sat a man in an iron cage. Now the man to look on seemed very sad. He sat with his eyes looking down to the ground. His hands folded together, and he sighed as if he would break his heart. Then said Christian, 'what means this?' At which the Interpreter bid him talk with the man. Then said Christian to the man, 'What are you?' The man answered, 'I am what I was not once.' Christian, 'what were you once?' The man said, 'I was once a fair and flourishing professor, both in mine own eyes and also in the eyes of others I once was, as I thought fair for the celestial city, and had then every joy at the thoughts that I should get there.' Christian, 'Well, but what are you now?' The man said, 'I am now a man of despair and am shut up in this iron cage. I cannot get out. Oh, now I cannot.' Christian, 'but how did you come into this condition?' Man, 'I left off to watch and be sober. I laid the reins upon the neck of my lusts. I sinned against the light of the Word and the goodness of God, and I have grieved the Spirit, and He is gone. I tempted the devil and he has come to me. I have provoked God to anger, and He has left me. I've so hardened my own heart that I cannot repent.'

Then said Christian to the Interpreter, 'But is there no hope for such a man as this?' 'Ask him,' said Interpreter. Then said Christian, 'Is there no hope but you must be kept in the iron cage of despair?' The man, 'No, none at all.' Christian, 'why? The Son of the Blessed is very pitiful.' The man, 'I have crucified Him to myself afresh. I've despised His person. I've despised His righteousness. I've counted His blood an unholy thing. I have done despite to the Spirit of grace.'

Therefore, I have shut myself out of all the promises, and there now remains to me nothing but threatenings; dreadful threatenings; fearful threatenings of certain judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour me as an adversary.' Christian, 'For what did you bring yourself into this condition?' Man, 'for the lusts, the pleasures, the profits of this world, and the enjoyment of which I did then promise myself much delight, but now every one of those things also bite me and gnaw me like a burning worm.' Christian, 'but can you not now repent and turn?' Man, 'God has denied me repentance.' (Listen to this) 'His Word gives me no encouragement to believe. Yea, Himself has shut me up in this iron cage, nor can all the men in the world let me out. Oh, eternity, eternity... how shall I grapple with the misery that I must meet with in eternity.' Then said the Interpreter to Christian, 'let this man's misery be remembered by you and be an everlasting caution to you.' 'Well,' said Christian, 'this is fearful. God help me to watch and be sober and to pray that I may shun the cause of this man's misery.'"

But you see, the one line above all that I really want you to hear: His Word gives me no encouragement to believe. We cannot think that we can repent whenever we want. We cannot think that we'll find the Word convicting or encouraging; that we'll find the promises something that our faith lays hold on. We can't just assume that happens. That doesn't happen unless the Spirit of God causes that to happen. And when the Spirit is outraged, and the Spirit is so grieved, that He withdraws, it's all over. That's the picture. Bunyan painted a picture.

How many there are who come face-to-face with the truth and then say, I want to enjoy my sin just for a season and then I'll come back. I'll give myself up to my lusts. Nobody plans to go to hell. People who give themselves up to their lust, people who will turn their back on the truth, people will willfully go on in their sin, people who have once been enlightened, they just turn and walk away. They don't think to go to hell. They don't think to end up in this iron cage. But you see, the day comes when all of a sudden you recognize, it's too late. Maybe death. Probably it's death. Probably most people that go through this, unlike the man actually who's depicted here; the man who gets there probably doesn't care.

James: Question. Earlier you were talking about John 6 and how all that come to Me, I will in no wise cast out. Sometimes, I've seen this happen a lot when people hear that and then they go to Hebrews 12:17 where it talks about Esau and says, "He desired to inherit the blessing," and they say, well, that's pointing to salvation, and yet he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent though he sought it with tears. And they'll say, well, Jesus says, Come to Me. I won't cast you out. Yet, Esau sought to come and was cast out. What would you say to someone? Because that seems to be a common theme.

Tim: I would say that obviously the account of Esau is not Esau coming to Christ. It's not that. Because clearly, we have a promise that if we go to Christ, we will not be cast out. Look, there are promises, even in the Old Testament, concerning the needy, concerning the helpless who come to the Lord, and that He will not despise them. What we have to ask is, let's consider the account of Esau. What was it that he wanted? (incomplete thought) What we want to be careful about is that we take repentance to always mean the same thing in Scripture. Because clearly it

doesn't. There are times when the word is used with regards to God. What we want to do is ask this question: The basic meaning of the word is a change of mind. Now, there is a change of mind that specifically we think of often as biblical repentance. Yes. There is a saving repentance. But it doesn't necessarily mean, if you just take the Greek verb there, that it means that this was salvific kind of repentance that took place. He changed his mind. Well, let's go back to the Old Testament and think. At what point did he change his mind? In other words, was there any place where he had regret? Or can we even go to the Old Testament and find out what's being alluded to there? Is that just some kind of New Testament revelation about Esau? Let's go to Hebrews and find the actual account. Which is interesting because Esau is actually being talked about here in the book of Hebrews. What's the text on that?

Hebrews 12:16-17 "that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent though he sought it with tears." Now, there are several things going on here that you want to give consideration to. One is that this same author is the very same author that back in Hebrews 6, and you can look at it for yourself. Go back to Hebrews 6:4. "It's impossible in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they're crucifying again the Son of God to their own harm and holding Him up to contempt." Now, the point that I would make is that in Hebrews 12, the same author is giving us this account. Well, what's he already told us? He's already told us it's impossible to renew somebody unto repentance once they've fallen away after having all these things. (incomplete thought)

Listen, the book of Hebrews is a whole. The message is a unit. He's dealing with the same issue all the way through this book. Which is what? What's the issue? You have people who are drifting. You have people whose arms are hanging down. They're becoming weary in this race. And they're thinking about giving up the race. They're thinking about succumbing to all the pressures and not keeping on. That's why the warnings. That's why you get these warnings. Because they're growing weary. He brings up Esau for the same reason he gives the warning in Hebrews 6. Which is what? It's the warning to not give up. It's the warning to keep on. It's the warning to keep embracing Christ. So my point is this, what is being taught in Hebrews 6 is it's impossible to restore or renew somebody unto repentance. Now, what does that mean? Does that mean that it's impossible for somebody to be saved even if they repent? Or is it saying it's impossible for them to repent? And I take it it's the second. I take it just like Bunyan takes it. That basically, this man in the iron cage is not repenting and Christ won't have anything to do with him. You see, that would conflict with John 6:37. If somebody truly in humility and brokenness and faith and repentance is coming to Christ, they will be accepted. That's why I take Hebrews 6 to mean there's no more repentance, to mean just that. There's no more repentance. They're not capable of repentance. Not that their repentance won't be accepted, they're not capable of it.

So, when you go over now to Hebrews 12, you have to ask the question, ok, what are we dealing with here? Is this really saying that he repented and it wasn't accepted? Or is it saying that at such a time when he would have repented, he didn't find it possible? Just read it. And I would say this, even if you want to take the word to mean the base meaning: a change of mind, you really have to look at the change of mind. Was it that he wanted salvation? Or was it more carnal than that? Was his change of mind that now he wanted the physical blessings that were attached with having kept his birthright. I mean, those are the things that you need to think about in this. Because if you say, he was genuinely repentant, and he wasn't accepted, it's a flat out contradiction to Christ receiving those who come. And I recognize Esau lived long before Christ, but by faith, Abraham... by faith, Abel... by faith, Enoch... It's been by faith ever since the beginning. And I think we have to take that text at face value. And you just read it.

Like I say, just read it. Are you convinced it's actually saying that he repented; he genuinely repented and it wasn't accepted. It could be that, but I don't think it has to be that. I think it could be that at such a time when it was in his mind that he'd like to go back and have it all over again because he wanted the blessing, now it's too late. And even if you do size that repentance up to be a change of mind, he did change his mind. There was a day when he freely gave it away, and there was a day when he would have liked to have had it back. That's a change of mind. But I think that can fall well short of salvation. So basically both accounts: Hebrews 6 and Hebrews 12 are both being directed at the same people, and they're both being used for the same purpose - to discourage these people from falling out of the race. Both of them are meant to encourage them to press on. They're warnings. Both of them are warnings. They're warnings not to step out. Now, is it possible, that there is a repentance, or can anybody think of a repentance that doesn't save?

James: 2 Corinthians 7:10

Tim: There you have it. Somebody want to quote that?

James: Godly grief produces repentance that leads to life, whereas worldly grief produces a repentance that leads to death. Something like that.

Tim: Somebody want to read it verbatim?

James: "For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death." Yeah, it doesn't actually say that repentance is actually created there. Anybody think of any place else where repentance may be something that needs to be repented of? Judas? What did Judas do? James: He changed his mind. I don't know if that's the same metanoia word.

Tim: I think it is actually. Where is that found? It may not say repent in the ESV, but I think it does in the KJV. And I think it is the same word. Anybody know where that is?

James: I thought it was in Mark. (from the room) Matthew 27:3?

Tim: Yeah, I was thinking it was Matthew. What translation do you have, brother?

James: NKJV.

Tim: What does it say?

James: "Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.' They said, 'what is that to us? You see to it.'"

Tim: So it says remorseful. Anybody have the King James? Sid, you have it?

Sid: "And Judas which had betrayed Him when he saw that He was condemned, repented himself..."

Tim: There it is.

Sid: "...and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests..."

Tim: TAnd I do think it's metanoia. I think it's changed the mind. And anyway, that text right there would be one that you would want to write in the margin of Hebrews 12, even though in your ESV or whatever - even the NKJV doesn't use that. We could look that up as far as the actual Greek there, but I think it is the metanoia terminology. (from the room: unintelligible) Um, ok. There are various places where you get closely associated word group there. It's a synonymous word. It's not the -noia. It's the same one that's found where you have the two sons, and they're both told to go work and one says I will and the other one says I won't, and they change their minds. It's the same word there. But anyway, you see the basic related word group there.

The whole point is that if you repent and believe, you will be saved. Whatever happened with Esau is meant to be a warning not to stray away, and it obviously was not saving. Whatever change of mind that it was, it was not saving. (incomplete thought) it says that he wanted the blessing. That's the real issue. If you go back into Genesis, what was it that he was so upset about? Really, what he was so upset about was when his father was not able to bless him. Remember? Doesn't it say in Hebrews he wanted the blessing? What happened was once his father gave the blessing to his brother, he said to him, I don't have anymore for you. And he's just, come on! Isn't there something left? Give me a blessing. That was the issue. Was there ever a place where he actually came back and we find in the Old Testament, in the Genesis account? See, two things happened. There was the birthright and there was the blessing. Jacob ended up with both of them. How? The one through the stew. The second one through deception. So, Esau willingly gave up his birthright. He did not willingly give up the blessing. But

the issue was that it seems to tie them both together in the Hebrews 12 account. Where he willingly gave up the one - that's what it faults him for. And then when he would have had the blessing, it wasn't there for him to get.

But yeah, that's a far cry short of actually wanting salvation. He wanted the blessings. Anybody remember what the blessings were? What was it? What exactly was said to Jacob by Isaac? Anybody remember? Genesis 27:27.

(from the room) He came near and kissed him, and then it says, "May God give you of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine, let people serve you and nations bow down to you, be lord over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be everyone who blesses you."

Tim: And you know, the thing is he likely didn't even know what was said. (incomplete thought) What happens when Esau goes in? What's he told? See, Esau doesn't even know what happened, so he doesn't know what was said. But what does it say when he goes in? Can you read the account from there?

(from the room) "I'm your son. Your firstborn, Esau. Then Isaac trembled very violently and said, 'who was it then who hunted game and brought it to me and I ate it all before you came and I have blessed him. Yes, and he shall be blessed.' As soon as Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry and said to his father, 'bless me, even me also, oh, my father!' But he said, 'your brother came deceitfully, and he has taken away your blessing.'"

Tim: And see it there? He wants the blessing. He wants the blessing. But what the author of Hebrews is doing is he's tying it together with the fact that he wickedly gave away his birthright. And it's like the author ties it together. One he willingly gave up. The other God took from him. You could say Jacob took it from him, but God took it from him. And when he wanted it, you don't even know that he necessarily knew what it was, but he wanted it. And even after it was already given to Jacob, he still wanted it. I mean, even if it was possible to have it and Jacob already has it, just give it to me too. Whatever. He might have had some idea of what it consisted of. But, he knew it was good and he wanted it. And so, I think the change of mind is where he freely gave away his birthright, now all of a sudden, the change of mind - the repentance is, well, now I want it. I want the blessing. I so freely gave that away - counted it as nothing, but now I want it. There was that change of mind. Now he couldn't get it. That's what the author of Hebrews is looking at.

And look, the thing that he's doing is saying this: he's saying don't be like him. Don't despise what you have. You come under the truth - don't despise that. Because you know what? The day will come when you'll change your mind too. The day's going to come when you're going to want that. You're going to want that good thing that's promised in the Gospel. You're going to want that good thing that's promised by the blood of Jesus Christ; the blood of that covenant.

Don't throw it away cheaply. That's the issue. Because the day's coming, you'll give anything for it. But it's too late. You see, that's the whole idea of Hebrews. These guys are drifting. You don't want to neglect such a great salvation. You don't want to be like those Jews in the wilderness who hardened their hearts. What happened? Today, if you hear His voice, harden not your hearts. Like those there in the wilderness. You don't want to do that. Don't toy with your souls. That's the real issue in all of this.

But anyways, I just don't believe you can make any kind of solid case that Esau was broken and repentant and wanted God's salvation. I think he was carnally wanting earthly blessings, and he had already despised the real value. Can you imagine? Think about it. He had the birthright in the lineage of God. And he sold it for a bowl of pottage; a bowl of whatever you want to make it out to be - oatmeal, soup... for one bowl, he sold it. He sold himself out of the very Messianic line; of the lineage of the people of God and the patriarchs. That's what you don't want to do. That's the issue behind all of this.

But I'll tell you what, no matter what people have done, you press them towards Christ. Press them towards Christ. Because you know what? No matter what they've done, no matter how much light they've despised, no matter what, if they will go to Christ, Christ will accept them. You can look at every single account where people came to Christ, He accepted them. Now, He'd give them terms. There were those who didn't like His terms. And they went away. But everybody who came to Him, and they were willing to take what He had to offer, they received. All of them. You never find a case where He says, nope. You find where they walked away, but you don't find where He walked away. He says I'll never cast you out.

Well, we obviously can't go to the second question. Good thoughts and good conversation. Good discussion. Anything else before we wrap this topic up? Ok. Father, we would be, Lord, as this fictional character of Bunyan's: Christian, fearfully regarding this man in this iron cage. We know there actually were men like Esau. Real men who found themselves in the iron cage.

Lord, we know this is a reality and we know it's life and death. We know souls are at stake. Lord, we know this is for keeps. This is all or nothing. We've got to have Christ. Christ. Christ. Oh, Lord, give us the grace that none of us would ever be fools to exchange Christ for anything else. Lord, we pray, may great grace fall upon us. May great grace keep us. Lord, we know that left to ourselves, oh, what fools we would be. What choices we would make. Lord, keep us kept by the power of God through faith. Oh, may the power of God be real in our lives. We pray in Christ's name, Amen.