

A choice must be made! Matthew 12:22-37 read-slow:

This morning we are continuing our look into Matthew chapter 12 and I have titled this message a choice must be made.

In this section we are going to see that Jesus will be emphasizing the fact that a choice must be made about Him.

Also within this section we will come to a couple of verses that speak about one of the big controversies in the bible and that is the unpardonable sin.

- And hopefully by the grace of God and by the Holy Spirit we will have a clear understanding of what that text means.
- And context is very important in understand any verse of scripture.

I speak with as many people as I possibly can about Jesus and most people think they can remain neutral when it comes to Jesus. They may not even say it but that is what they think.

- They think they can believe in Jesus the way they want to and everything is going to be okay in the end.
- But the reality is that it just doesn't work that way when it comes to Jesus.
- A choice must be made.

C.S. Lewis said:"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

A clear and true reading of the bible will clearly show us that Jesus tells us we must make a choice concerning Him.

- There is no neutrality when it comes to Jesus.
- If people think they can remain neutral concerning Jesus, they must understand their lack of choice is their choice.

As those great Canadian Philosopher's from the band of RUSH once said.

- If you choose not to decide, you still have made a choice.

Many people don't like the fact that they have to make a choice when it comes to Jesus, but I for one love the fact that I have to make a choice for Jesus.

- ✠ Because the bible says that if I make a choice for Jesus I can know that I am saved. Amen!
- ✠ John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
- ✠ 1st John 5:13 these things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. Amen!
- ✠ I love the fact that I know I am saved and I am on my way to heaven; to spend eternity with God. The One who created me, designed me, and redeemed me.
- ✠ I get to spend eternity with the very One I was created for. Amen!

V22-23 read-slow;

We now have Jesus performing another miracle of healing and deliverance on a man that was brought to Him.

And the first thing we have to do is praise God for whom ever it was who brought this man to Jesus.

- ✠ The best thing you and I can ever do for someone is to bring them to Jesus. Amen!
- ✠ And the best thing we can ever do for ourselves is make sure we bring ourselves to Jesus. Amen!

What a friend we have in Jesus,
 all our sins and griefs to bear!
 What a privilege to carry
 everything to God in prayer!
 O what peace we often forfeit,
 O what needless pain we bear,
 all because we do not carry
 everything to God in prayer.

Can we find a friend so faithful
 who will all our sorrows share?
 Jesus knows our every weakness;
 take it to the Lord in prayer.

The first reaction from this miracle is that it causes some to wonder if Jesus could be the Son of David the long awaited Messiah.

- And the reason they are thinking this is because one of the things the Messiah would do was to heal those that are suffering.

However their response is really more negative than positive.

- In the Greek they are really saying, this Man cannot be the Son of David can He?
- Even though the miracles testified to Jesus being the Messiah there was something about Him that caused the people to question it.

And the reason is because they also believed that the Messiah would be a conquering King.

- And the prophecies of the Messiah do claim He will come as a conquering King but that will be when He comes the second time.

This time Jesus came as the Suffering Servant in order to deliver us from our sin problem.

- And because Jesus is not conquering the world the people are having reservations about believing He truly is the Son of David.

V24 read-slow;

We now see that the religious leaders also have an opinion concerning the miracle that took place.

Even though the regular people are having difficulty believing Jesus could be the Son of David at least they are considering it.

The Pharisees however already have their mind made up and they are contributing this miracle to Satan and not the power of the Holy Spirit.

Please understand: that what is taking place now with the Pharisees is going to help us understand what Jesus meant when He speaks about the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

- ✠ And part of understanding the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is that they are contributing the work of God to Satan.

Show them: Jesus is now going to show the Pharisees that what they are thinking cannot in anyway be true.

- And then He is going to give them a strict warning concerning the consequences of their choices.

And one of the things we need to get out to the world around us is that there are consequences to our choices especially concerning the choice people make about Jesus.

- As we share with people we need to as graciously and kindly as we can let them know that there are consequences to their choices.

Ray Comfort: this week there was an earthquake in New Zealand and Ray Comfort the Evangelist and open air-preacher is from New Zealand.

- And just this week he was having an email dialogue with a man who lives in New Zealand and Ray warned him about facing hell for eternity.

Listen to what Ray told him:

- Jesus said if you lust after a woman, you commit adultery with her. I said that Hell was real, and that God made a way for us to be forgiven and have everlasting life.
- He said, That is scary, you mean I have committed adultery about 140 times already today? Hell won't be so bad – at least all my mates will be there and all the naughty girls. Just don't tell me it will be onshore all day every day. That will really make me gnash my teeth. Heaven sounds really boring -- all the goody two shoes, kids drinking tea and singing hymns all day. Is there surf there?"
- Ray emailed back that there would be no friendship or any pleasure in Hell and talked about his misunderstanding of Heaven, hoping he would get back to me.

The following day, the earthquake struck. His shop was very close to the epicenter. I don't know what happened to him.

Ray cared for this man so he made it clear to him that there are consequences to our choices. And we need to the same.

V25-26 read-slow;

Jesus is now going to show the Pharisees how illogical their reasoning is in claiming He performed this miracle through the power of Satan.

- And He is basically telling them that they are busted and they are willingly rejecting Him as Messiah.

And another part to understanding the unpardonable sin is that they are willingly rejecting Him as Messiah.

- They are not tricked or confused but they are willingly rejecting Him as their Messiah.

The first point Jesus makes is obvious. That no kingdom or city or house that is divided against itself can stand.

- ✠ And if Satan casts out Satan he is essentially destroying himself and his kingdom will not stand.

The greatest danger our nation ever faced was during the Civil War when our nation was divided against itself.

- ✠ And the greatest danger in the house is when the husband and wife are divided against one another.
- ✠ And the greatest danger to the church is when the church is divided against herself.
- ✠ That is why we are told to avoid those who that cause division.

My testimony: just think if someone came to me saying Satan was the one that changed my life and not God.

- Before I became a Christian I was serving the devil, just like the rest of you were.
- So why would Satan change my life when back then I was trying to further his kingdom, when now I am doing everything in my power to oppose his kingdom.
- Back then I was destroying people's lives and now I am trying to save them.
- So it doesn't make any sense to think that Satan would change my life.

Or think of it this way: what would we think if that during the Civil War we saw General Grant shooting his own soldiers?

- We would rightly think he is trying to cause the North to loose!

V28-29 read-slow;

Jesus makes it even more personal now by asking them by whom do your sons cast out demons?

- Jesus is saying that if I am doing the same type of work as your sons, and you say My work is done through Satan, then that means your sons work must be done by Satan as well.

Now; either these Pharisees have to agree with Jesus or they are saying their sons are working for the devil. And I don't think they are going to do that.

At that time there many people claiming to have delivered people from demon possession, yet the Pharisees did not question them so why are they questing Jesus.

- That's called a hypocrite.

Kingdom: And Jesus further puts them in the hole by telling them that if I am doing this work by the Spirit of God, then that means the Kingdom of God has come upon you.

- And if the Kingdom of God has come upon you, than that also means the King is here as well.

Jesus is putting these Pharisees between a rock and a hard place.

V29 read-slow;

If Jesus was casting out demons by Satan that means Satan is in charge.

- But not only is Jesus not working for Satan, but He is in charge and He is starting to crush him underfoot. As prophesied in Genesis 3:15.

Because Jesus is the One that is in charge that means:

- He can go into the strong mans house and bind the strong man who is Satan and plunder his goods, which are you and I. Amen!

Set us free: I am so thankful that Jesus was able to bind the strong man that was in my life and set me free. Amen!

- The bible says that we all at one time walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.

All of us were all bound by Satan, but Jesus was able to come and kick down the door, bind Satan and then set us free. Amen!

- We are no longer children of the darkness but we are now children of the light.

David Guzick said: Jesus looks at every life delivered from Satan's domination and says, "I'm plundering the kingdom of Satan one life at a time." There is *nothing* in our life that *must* stay under Satan's domination. The One who binds the strong man and **will plunder his goods** is our risen Lord.

In our day: we can look around in our day and see many people that are bound by Satan in one way or another.

- But Jesus has also given us the ability to set people free from whatever bondage they may have.

Please understand that we are no match for Satan. If it wasn't for God watching over us and protecting us Satan could easily whip us out because he is a very powerful being.

- However Jesus has given us the gospel and the gospel is the power of God to salvation.
- If we desire to set people free as we have been set free we need to simply share the gospel and watch and see what takes place. Amen!

My heart: I so have a heart to set people free and that is why I so desire to teach the word of God as accurately as I possibly can because Jesus said the truth will set us free. And His word is Spirit and truth.

- Each week as I proclaim the word of truth as accurately as I can, I know it is helping to set people free.

Praying and fasting: we can also set people free through prayer and fasting.

- ✠ Through the gospel, the word of God, prayer and fasting we can pull down strongholds and arguments that keep people in bondage.

V30 read-slow;

The Pharisees do not have a foot to stand on that is why Jesus is giving them this very sober warning which; is a warning for all of men to heed.

Jesus has just told the Pharisees very clearly that there reasoning is wrong and that He is the One in charge and now they are going to have to make a willful choice of being with Him or being against Him.

- There is no middle ground and there is no straddling the fence.

This warning that Jesus is giving here is one that was not welcomed back then and it is not welcomed in the world today.

- People today do not like the fact that they have to make a choice and stay with that choice.
- People today love to leave their options open, they want to hang loose.
- But it just doesn't work that way with Jesus. A choice must be made.

Many people will say, well, I'm not against Jesus. But Jesus is telling us here that if you are not with Him you are by default against Him.

Jonathan Edwards: Almost every natural man that hears about hell deceives himself, that he will escape it. He rests in his own false security, flattering himself with the good things he has done, is now doing, or intends to do.

Every man plots how he will escape damnation and flatters himself, thinking that his plans are ingenious and that his schemes will not fail.

- He clearly hears that only a few will be saved, and that the greater part of humanity who have died before him have gone to hell. But each one imagines that his plans to escape are better than theirs. He has no intention of going to the place of torment; he tells himself that he will carry out his plans with such care that they cannot fail.

Edwards hit the nail right on the head.

- There are so many people that have deceived themselves into thinking they can follow Jesus any way they want and in the end every thing will be all right!
- But Jesus is only giving us the warning here in the next couple of verses He will give us the consequences to our choice.

Frank: one time when I was speaking with this man who was living a homosexual life and claimed to be a Christian at the same time.

- And as we were going back and forth about the issue of homosexuality and his claims of why he was the way he was.
- I eventually just told him that you don't have a homosexual problem you have a biblical problem.
- You either believe the bible, or you don't and Jesus tells us we are either with Him or against Him!

Please understand Jesus is not looking to be hard on people unnecessarily.

- We have seen many times in this gospel that Jesus deeply cares for people and we will continually see that because Jesus said He came to seek and save that which was lost..
- But remember the context here. Jesus is mainly speaking to a people that have seen Him do a great work and they were contributing that work to Satan.
- Jesus is simply trying to warn them before they make their final decision about Him.

This statement by Jesus simply follows suit with the rest of scripture.

- God told the children of Israel to choose whom they would follow.
- Jesus said, I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.
- Peter said Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.
- Paul said, For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.

Also the reality is there are people around like these Pharisees.

- They go around from church to church, doing their own thing, following Jesus when they feel good and then living in sin when it can bring them some kind of pleasure.
- These are also the type of people that need to heed that warning.

But what about us: that are here this morning?

- This warning from Jesus ought to just cause us to make sure we are staying on track.
- If we are slipping away and leaving our first love we need to give heed, repent and get back to living for Jesus.

Barclay writes; we may take a very simple analogy. We may apply this saying to ourselves.

- If our presence does not strengthen the church, then our absence is weakening it. There is no halfway house.

Read Barclay commentary:

V31-32 read-slow;

Jesus is now telling the Pharisees in particular, but to all that the sin of the blasphemy of the Spirit will not be forgiven.

Now this does seem to go against the fact that God wants to forgive people and be gracious and merciful to them.

- ✠ But if a person rejects the work of the Spirit there is nothing else that can be done.
- ✠ Who wrote the bible? The Spirit. Who is revealing Jesus? The Spirit. Who is revealing the truth? The Spirit.
- ✠ If a person rejects all the means of salvation that the Spirit is giving they cannot be saved.

The first thing: that needs to be addressed is that some of you may be here wondering if you have committed the unforgivable sin.

- ✠ You like Pastor Bob you don't know me that well and I think I may be the one that has committed that sin.
- ✠ But the fact that you are concerned about committing that sin is a good indicator that you have not.
- ✠ The person that does not care if they have committed it or not; is the person that may have committed it or is close to committing it.

Many people in the world think there are many sins that God cannot forgive such as murder, rape, and suicide, but all of those sins can be forgiven.

- ✠ The only sin that cannot be forgiven by God is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

Context: we must understand the context in order to understand what Jesus is speaking about.

- ✠ The first thing that took place was a miracle. Jesus healed a man and set him free.
- ✠ And the Pharisees to whom Jesus is speaking testified that a miracle took place they did not deny it.
- ✠ **Secondly** they claimed the miracle was a work of Satan rather than the Spirit of God.

Please follow: So the miracles are not in dispute, they saw the miracle and Jesus argued that the miracle must have been done by the Spirit of God there is no other option.

- ✠ And yet; (here is the key) they willingly reject it. There is a will involved.

The Pharisees are not rejecting the work of the Spirit due to ignorance or unbelief but out of a conscious disputing of the indisputable.

D.A. Carson said it this way: the rejection of the truth in full awareness that, that, is, exactly what one is doing- thoughtfully, willfully, and self-consciously rejecting the work of the Spirit even though there can be no other explanation of Jesus' miracle than that.

Jesus showed them that the miracle was flat out a work of the Spirit of God yet they knew it and willingly rejected it

- ✠ **The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is a willful reject of the work of the Spirit of God.**
- ✠ **A continual on-going rejection of forgiveness!**

Today: Now can a person commit this sin today? Absolutely.

- ✠ The Spirit is in the world convicting them of sin, righteousness, and of judgment, and glorifying Jesus in their hearts.
- ✠ We also have the bible and people can see the work that the Spirit is doing in the lives of people.
- ✠ So when a person continually rejects the work of the Spirit in their life they are on their way of willfully blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

Hard to believe: I know it's hard to believe especially for those of us who are believers, but there are people that will willingly reject the work of the Spirit even though they know it is true.

I have had people tell me about the change they have seen in my life and how they want that change yet for some willful reason they continue to blaspheme the Spirit.

I have spoken with some people over and over again about Jesus. I have answered question upon question and I simply cannot believe how they have not become a Christian yet.

✠ But for some unknown reason to me, but God knows they willingly reject the work of the Spirit even though they know it is true.

When I was in my basement that day when the Holy Spirit revealed Jesus to me I got down and prayed and received Jesus into my heart.

✠ Now if I had rejected that voice I would have been willingly rejecting the work of the Spirit and I would have been on my way to the blasphemy of the Spirit.

✠ Once a person willfully rejects the work of the Spirit there can be no forgiveness because there is nothing else God can do for that person.

Son of Man.: The reason people can be forgiven if they speak about the Son of Man is because they could be confused when it comes to Jesus.

✠ As we saw in our context the first people that spoke about the miracle of Jesus knew He could have been the Messiah but they were not to sure.

✠ But one cannot make a mistake about the Spirit of God.

V33 read-slow;

Jesus is now telling us how to avoid the unpardonable sin and that is repentance.

✠ A tree is known by its fruit so if we want to make good fruit come forth in our lives then we need to repent.

One of the best ways to know if you have truly repented and are a good tree bringing forth good fruit is by the fact the people are making fun of you because of who you are or persecuting you because of who you are.

- When people call you a goody-two-shoes, or holy roller or Jesus freak, that means they are paying you a compliment. Because they are basically saying there is good fruit in your life.
- So the next time you are made fun of for being a Christian don't get angry but thank them for noticing the change in your life.

V34-37 read-slow;

If you have pen, please underline the phrase Brood of vipers.

- Once again we see the false image of Jesus being washed away.
- So many people think Jesus is never hard on anybody but here we see Jesus calling the Pharisees a pack of snakes!

People also think that Jesus doesn't get angry at sin but we get a small glimpse of the anger He has toward sin.

So many people think they are going to stand before Jesus one day and He is going to slap them on the back and say, hey kid you did your best come on in.

- But just like Jesus is angry with these men calling them a brood of vipers, people are going to appear before Jesus and see His righteous anger in His eyes and they will have to give an account for there lives and for every single idle word they utter!

Adam Clarke said that the sense of the ancient Greek word used for an **idle word** is “a word that *does nothing*, that neither minister's *grace* nor *instruction* to them who hear it.”

- **Now listen to this:** If this is true, many preachers might find themselves guilty of this sin. Ouch!

Before Jesus: It's scary to think of the fact that if I hadn't received Jesus I would have to give an account for every idle word I uttered.

- Before Jesus came into my life I had a filthy mouth.
- In fact I prided myself on how filthy and vulgar I could speak.

And like Jesus says here, I spoke evil and wicked things because my heart was evil and wicked.

Unfortunately many people think that what people do to us cause us to say bad things.

- But in reality when people do things to us they did not cause us to say bad things they just reveled the bad things that in our heart!

Lenski said: the heart is like a reservoir: it holds much, but when it gets to full, the mouth carries the overflow, off in speech.

Jesus says a good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.

Our words will indicate whether we have repented or not!

- People can say they have repented and believe in Jesus until they are blue in the face, but their words will indicate if they have truly repented or not.
- If we let people speak long enough they will eventually reveal where their heart is.

I can still remember the last time that I think I cursed:

- It was back in about 1996 and I was working in an attic trying to put in a new rafter when I smashed my head into a nail and man did it hurt. And I still have the dent from it. Maybe that explains a lot!
- Who knows maybe God left it there to remind me of that day.

Our words are going to justify us or our words are going to condemn us.

- If someone was to follow us around for a couple of weeks would our words indicate we have repented and are following Jesus, or will they indicate we have not repented and will be condemned in the day of judgment.

Obviously we are not saved or condemned by our words but our words will manifest if we are saved or condemned.

- Obviously we all slip at times, but the point is, is our life defined by good words or bad words?

One of the things I love about being saved is that I get to speak out of the good treasure of my heart.

- I simply love building people up and encouraging them.
- To have that perfect word for someone like an apple of gold in a setting of silver.
- And all of ought to enjoy doing the same as well.
- That doesn't mean we don't address sin of course we do but the majority of our conversation ought to be imparting grace to the hearer.

Ephesians 4:29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

As the body of Christ we need to be bring good things into the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Conclusion:

As Christians are we going to make a clear choice in following Jesus, showing Him and the world that we are truly for Him and not against Him?

Don't we want Jesus to be able to look down from heaven and say, Bob is really for Me!

- He is not perfect, but he is it make it plain to everyone that he is for Me!

Enoch: the bible says before Enoch was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God!

We should want the world to know that we have made a choice to follow Christ.

- Because if we make it known that we have made a choice to follow Jesus, He said that people will see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven.

God has also said in 1st Samuel 2:30 for those who honor Me I will honor.

Joshua: In Joshua's final address to the children of Israel he said; But as for me and my house we will serve the Lord! Amen!

Let's pray!

Communion!