

The Unpardonable Sin

To begin with let us consider one of our Lord's parables recorded by Luke. It is frequently called "*the added parable*," because of Luke's comment:

"And as they heard these things, *He added* and spoke a parable, *because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear*" (Luke 19:11).

In this parable our Lord describes how Pilate and other Roman rulers received their authority from Caesar, and likens this procedure to His own case:

"He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. "And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. "But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after Him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:12-14).

The analogy is simple and clear. Christ had been chosen by God to reign and was to go far away - into heaven itself - "to receive for Himself a kingdom and to return." During His absence His servants would work for Him but, as it sometimes happened in the cases of rulers called by Caesar to be vested with authority, His citizens would hate Him and send a message after Him, saying: "*We will not have this man to reign over us.*"

The rest of the parable describes the King's dealings with His servants, and predicts the doom of His enemies, but suffice it here to say that undoubtedly Stephen was the *messenger* referred to. It was he whom the nation Israel stoned to death and sent back to God with the message: "***We will not have this Man to reign over us.***"

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

What confusion there has been on the subject of the unpardonable sin! How many - some of them in mental institutions - have been haunted by the fear that they have committed this sin - and this while Bible teachers themselves are so far from agreed as to what the unpardonable sin is!

Surely those who know the gospel of the grace of God will not strike fear into the hearts of others by the threat of an *unpardonable* sin, for:

"... we have redemption through His blood, THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS, ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE" (Eph. 1:7).

"Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. BUT WHERE SIN ABOUNDED, GRACE DID MUCH MORE ABOUND:

"THAT AS SIN HATH REIGNED UNTO DEATH, EVEN SO MIGHT GRACE REIGN THROUGH RIGHTEOUSNESS UNTO ETERNAL LIFE BY JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD" (Rom. 5:20,21).

Surely there is no room for an *unpardonable* sin here. It has been well said that sinners who die in unbelief in this dispensation of grace will go to the lake of fire with all their sins *unpardoned*, but not because one of them was *unpardonable*.

Our Lord's warnings about the unpardonable sin had the coming of the Holy Spirit in view. Not because the Holy Spirit is a more important member of the Trinity than the Holy Father or the Holy Son. It was simply that with the coming of the Holy Spirit to plead with Israel all three members of the Trinity would have done their part to bring the nation to repentance and salvation.

All through Old Testament times Israel had resisted the Father. The Father, in turn, had sent the Son, who had taught and labored among them, only to be rejected too. Now the Son was to send the Spirit, and Israel would have her last chance. Hence the Lord said:

"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 ... neither in this world [age] neither in the world [age] to come" (Matt. 12:31,32).

As the number seven in Scripture speaks of *perfection* so the number three speaks of *completeness*. God Himself is a trinity: *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*.

The number three too, is stamped upon His creation. We ourselves have the number three stamped upon us for we are *body, soul and spirit*. The structural universe bears the same number, being made up of *time, space and matter*. And each of these again is three-fold. Time: *past, present and future*. Space: *length, breadth and height*. Matter: *energy, motion and phenomena*.²¹ And the Scriptures, in dealing with the universe, designate "*Things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth*" (Phil. 2:10).

In homiletics, the *three-point* sermon is the standard. In business we have our "*three days of grace*" and the auctioneer's "Going, going - *gone?* or "First, second - *third* and last call!" Even in sports the number three is prominent. What boy does not know that in baseball there are three strikes to an out and *three* outs to an inning? And it is always *three* cheers, never two or four. And the simplest form of the race begins with a "Ready, get set - *go!*"²¹ See Nathan R. Wood's enlightening book: *The Trinity in the Universe*.

The number three is prominent even in parental discipline. When the writer was a boy it was not strange to hear his father say: "Now this is the second time I've spoken to you. If I have to speak again--!!!" And thus it was with the nation Israel. When our Lord warned Israel's leaders that sin and blasphemy against the Holy Spirit would not be forgiven them it was simply because the Holy Spirit was soon to descend and give them their third and last opportunity to repent as a nation. And after all their sin and blasphemy against the Father and the Son the Holy Spirit *did* come down at Pentecost, working among them so mightily and confronting them with such overwhelming proofs of our Lord's royal rights that their continued rejection of Him was utterly inexcusable and unpardonable.

Yet they did continue in their rebellion. They had resisted the Father and the Son, and now Stephen had to say: "*Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.*"

THREE BRUTAL MURDERS

Every student of the Word should know the three brutal murders around which all history revolves. These three murders represent Israel's response to God's three-fold call to repentance. They explain the unpardonable sin and form the background for the present dispensation of grace.

It was John the Baptist, the last of the Old Testament prophets, who was sent as the forerunner of Christ to call Israel to repentance. He was beheaded by Herod, the wicked and licentious "king of the Jews." After John, Christ Himself took up the cry: "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" Him

they crucified. Then, at Pentecost, Israel was given a *third* opportunity to repent, until they shed blood again, stoning Stephen to death.

It should be noticed, too, that their guilt, as well as their bitter enmity, increased with the second and third murders. As to the beheading of John the Baptist, they *permitted* it.²² As to the crucifixion of Christ, they *demand*ed it (Luke 23:33,34). As to the stoning of Stephen, they *committed* it, casting him out of the city with their own hands and stoning him there.

And so that generation in Israel committed the unpardonable sin which our Lord warned would not be forgiven, either in that age, or in the age to come.²³

(From *Acts Dispensationally Considered*, by C. R. Stam --Vol. I Pp. 235-240).

²² Had Israel, responded to John's call to repentance Herod would never have dared to even put John in jail. This explains why our Lord did nothing to release him from prison, even though this had offended John. It was not *His*, but *theirs* to do something about John's unjust imprisonment and every moment he spent in prison testified against them (Read carefully Luke 3:18-20; 7:19-29 and Matt. 14:1-11).

²³ Remember, *this present age of grace* was still a mystery when this was spoken, so that "the age to come" refers to the coming kingdom age.

Thus we close this article by quoting again those precious passages from Paul's epistles which clearly *deny the possibility* of any "unpardonable sin" during the present "*dispensation of the grace of God*":

". . . we have redemption through His blood, THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS, ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE" (Eph. 1:7).

"Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. BUT WHERE SIN ABOUNDED, GRACE DID MUCH MORE ABOUND:

"That as sin hath reigned unto death, *even so might grace reign* through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:20, 21).