

Jesus issues a chilling warning that, while certain blasphemies can be forgiven, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable. Then, after a man asks Jesus to compel the man's brother to share the inheritance with him, Jesus warns the crowd against materialism and elevating the accumulation of wealth above the importance of having a right relationship with God.

**Verses 1-7:** Jesus warned His followers of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who pretended to be righteous but had wicked hearts. Even though they hid their true nature from men, they could not hide it from God, Who knows the secrets of every heart and will make them known on judgment day. Jesus also stated that we should not fear man who can only take away our physical life, but that we should fear God Who can take away our spiritual life as well. God is concerned with every detail about us.

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8 Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: 9 But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.

The Greek word for "confess" can have two possible meanings: 1) to praise; 2) to admit sin. The context indicates that Jesus was speaking of publicly praising and aligning ourselves with Him. If we publicly proclaim our love and loyalty to Christ then He will do the same for us in the presence of the angels in heaven. However, the opposite is also true, for if we deny our association with Him on earth then He will deny that He knows us before the angels. Any shame that the world attempts to place on us because of our association with Christ will be temporary at best. In contrast, Christ's confession that He knows us is eternal – well worth any temporary shaming we might suffer on earth.

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10 And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.

Jesus addresses what has been called "the unpardonable sin," which is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. The nature of this sin has been debated by theologians and commentators for centuries and many Christians have worried that they might be guilty of this sin. **"And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him"** – Apparently any blasphemy spoken against Jesus can be forgiven, unlike that spoken against the Holy Spirit. We know that there have been those who blasphemed Christ and yet they were later forgiven. One of the thieves that was crucified with Christ was saved later after initially blaspheming Christ (Matt. 27:37-44; Luke 23:39-43). The apostle Paul also admitted that he was a blasphemer who had been saved by the mercy of God (**1 Tim. 1:13** "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief"). Paul's blasphemy was forgiven because he didn't understand what he was doing at the time.

**"but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven"** – Both Matthew and Mark place this statement of Jesus in the context of the Pharisees claiming that Jesus had been casting out demonic spirits using the power of Satan (Matt. 12:24-32; Mark 3:22-30). Mark's gospel specifically states that Jesus made this statement about blaspheming the Holy Spirit because of the Pharisees' claim that Jesus operated in Satan's power (**Mark 3:30** "Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit"). The blasphemy was targeted toward the Holy Spirit because they claimed that Jesus was "full of the devil" rather than being "filled with the Spirit." Many commentators suggest that the Pharisees knew that the Spirit of God was working through Jesus but their hardened rebellious hearts would not allow them to admit it, so they claimed that it was actually Satan's power that cast the demonic spirits out. This blasphemous claim was a rejection of the Holy Spirit, the One Who convicts us of our sin and opens our eyes to the truth of Christ (John 16:7-8). A rejection of the Holy Spirit makes the salvation that He offers unavailable, just as a rejection of a doctor is a rejection of the treatment that he offers.

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11 And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: 12 For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

Some have used this instruction from Jesus to say that studying to prepare before preaching a sermon is unnecessary or even forbidden. However, a Sunday morning sermon is a completely different scenario than the one that Jesus is talking about. He is referencing an situation where the disciples have been arrested or otherwise compelled to answer for their stand for Jesus Christ. In such a situation they would not have the luxury of being able to prepare but Jesus promised that the Holy Ghost would be with them to supply them with the words that they should say to defend the gospel on such short notice.

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13 And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. 14 And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?

Someone in the crowd spoke up as Jesus was teaching and made a request. The man saw Jesus as an authority figure that his brother would listen to if Jesus spoke to him. According to the Mosaic Law, the first born son received a double-portion of the inheritance compared to his brothers (Deut. 21:17). Since it was unlikely that this man was asking Jesus to compel his brother to divide the inheritance equally in contradiction to the law, it was likely that the older brother was refusing to give his brother his rightful share. However, Jesus refused to be drawn into a domestic or civil dispute between brothers, saying that He was not a civil judge or a "divider" (like an arbitrator) in such matters. Jesus had come to be the Savior of mankind, not to mediate temporal concerns like this.

15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

**“And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness”** – The man's request prompted Jesus to warn the crowd of the dangers of being covetous. Jesus had been teaching about things concerning the gospel and the kingdom of God, but this man's primary concern was obviously on material things.

**“for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth”** – Someone has said “He who dies with the most toys wins.” However, Jesus cautioned the crowd (and us) to not subscribe to this sort of thinking because the exact opposite is true. The meaning of life or way to a successful life is not to accumulate as many possessions or wealth as possible.

16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: 17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

To illustrate the point, Jesus spoke a parable about a rich man that had a bountiful harvest one year. Apparently the harvest was so large that his existing barns were too small to store it all. The world would think that this would be a good problem to have.

18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

**“And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods”** – This rich man forms a plan that he believes will be the solution to his “problem.” Since his existing barns are not large enough to store his possessions and the bountiful harvest, he decides that the solution is to tear them down and build larger barns in their place. Apparently he gives no thought to giving away the excess to the poor or for the work of God. He plans on keeping it all for himself.

**“And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years”** – This rich man celebrates the wealth that this bountiful harvest has provided and believes that it will be sufficient support him for many years to come. He will have enough “money in the bank” to last for a long time.

**“take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry”** – Thinking that his wealth provides all that he needs, the man plans to relax and enjoy his wealth. He thinks that he will have no worries for the foreseeable future.

20 But God said unto him, *Thou fool*, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? 21 *So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.*

**“But God said unto him, *Thou fool* [senseless; without reason], *this night thy soul* [life] shall be required of thee”** – The man had prepared for life but not for death. He thought that wealth was all that he needed and that he would live for many years. However, God decided that this man's days on earth were at an end. This rich man had not prepared himself for death and what would come after and God calls him a fool for neglecting that inevitable circumstance.

**“then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?”** – This man obviously knew how to make money but he would not be around to enjoy what he had accumulated. Someone else would take possession and enjoy everything that he had accumulated, perhaps someone that he didn't know or anticipate.

**“So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God”** – This parable that Jesus told illustrates the predicament of those who focus on accumulating material wealth for themselves and neglect their relationship with God. Those that do this are foolish because the wealth of this world is temporary but the spiritual riches that come from God are eternal. **Mark 8:36** “*For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*”