**VOLUME 4; CHAPTER 06 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**UNPARDONABLE SIN by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*Verily I say unto you, All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.*

*Mark 3:28,29*

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO OVERESTIMATE THE SOLEMNITY OF THESE words of our tender and compassionate Redeemer, yet they have always been considered difficult of interpretation, and strange, I had almost said wild, theories have been based upon them. I personally believe that much of the difficulty of interpretation is due to lack of the childlike heart, and a simple method in approaching them.

I think I speak for all Christian workers - and by Christian workers I mean all preachers of the gospel, or teachers, or individual workers who know what it is to come into personal dealing with men and women about spiritual things - when I that at some time or another someone has come to you and told you that they fear they have committed the unpardonable sin.

After some years of such work, and after having met with very many such cases, I have come to this deliberate conclusion, that when a person is obsessed by the idea that he or she has committed this sin, such obsession is the result of Satan's attempt to harass a saint, rather than his effort to destroy a sinner. If that may seem a somewhat strange thing to say, I want quite simply to attempt to make clear what I mean by it. I speak now entirely from experience, and experience may not be trusted as infallible foundation for dogmatic statement. Speaking entirely from experience, I declare that I have never yet found a man or woman, hard and rebellious and determined in sin, possessed by that particular fear. It is always the fear of the sensitive soul, always the fear of some trembling child of God. I do not say that it is always the case, but I do say that I have never met an exception. Therefore, I have come to the conclusion that Satan never destroys men by making them believe that, but he does harass the saints by attempting to make them believe that.

A method I have invariably followed for many years in dealing with those who come to me and say that they have, or that they fear they have committed the sin against the Spirit which has no forgiveness, is that of asking them this question: If you have committed this sin, will you be good enough to tell me what it is? I have never yet found a person possessed of the fear that they have committed it who could tell me what it is.

Notwithstanding all this, the words are full of solemnity. Jesus uttered no idle words. No words that fell from His lips are more full of startling arrest than these. No words are more calculated, or ought to be more calculated, to make men pause and listen and think, and search their own hearts: "Whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin." Immediately, let me mention one matter, so that I need not pause to refer to it again. The change in the versions is all-important. In the Authorized Version it reads, "Is in danger of eternal damnation" or condemnation. Here is one of the cases where there is absolutely no doubt that the text was incorrect. The translation resulted from the fact that the King James translators followed the translation of Tyndall, which translation was based upon the text of Erasmus, and there is no question at this point it was at fault. Now that other texts are at our disposal, it has been found that Jesus said a far more solemn thing, a far more searching thing than that man blaspheming the Spirit is in danger of eternal judgment, punishment, or condemnation. He declared that such a person is, not in danger of, not even guilty of, in our sense of the word guilty, but to be more literal and in this case far more accurate, he that committeth this sin is in the grip of an eternal sin. Such is the strong and startling word of our Lord.

I detain you yet another moment by way of introduction I ask you to remember that this most solemn thing was said in immediate relation to perhaps one of the most gracious things that ever fell from His lips, and that is why I read the twenty-eighth verse as well as the twenty-ninth. Hear again the twenty-eighth verse, "Verily I say unto you, All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme." Not all their sins may be forgiven, but shall be forgiven. It is one of the greatest words He ever uttered about forgiveness, a word in which He virtually declares that the value of His Cross covered the whole race, and that the redemption He provided was for all men; that sins, not may be, but shall be forgiven; except that sin which He here described as blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

We shall better understand the meaning of our Lord if we interpret His words in the light of the whole Bible. Therefore I want in very brief words to cover a large area in the next few minutes, as I remind you of what the Bible teaches concerning the Holy Spirit of God and His mission in human history. Having considered that it will be pertinent for us to inquire reverently, "what is the sin against the Holy Spirit." From these two lines of consideration we may draw lessons of practical application which shall be by the help of God for our own profit in this evening hour.

What does the Bible teach about the Holy Spirit? No one can be at all acquainted with this Library without knowing that the Spirit of God is referred to from the beginning to the end; yet that there is a distinct difference between the teaching of the New and the teaching of the Old Testament. They are not contradictory. They are complementary; yet if I had no New Testament, the doctrine of the Spirit's activity would be other than it is. Go back in memory to your Old Testament, and passing over it in rapid survey, think of what you find in it concerning the Spirit. His work is referred to in the first chapter of your Bible, the Spirit brooding over chaos, the agent through whom the will of God was wrought out so that cosmos came out of chaos, light from darkness, order out of disorder. I pass along over the pages and I find ever and anon, some individual at a crisis who, for a special purpose is spoken of as acting in co-operation with the Spirit. The Spirit was with Joseph and he was able to explain dreams. The Spirit fell upon Bezaleel, and he was able to be a cunning worker in gold for the beautifying of the house of God. The Spirit laid solemn imprisonment upon Balaam, and he was compelled to utter blessing when he desired to mutter cursing. The Spirit clothed Himself with Gideon, and Gideon became the deliverer of his people from Midianitish oppression. The Spirit fell upon Saul, and even he for a time was among the prophets. The Spirit spoke through the prophets, gave them visions and voices, and made them the messengers of Jehovah. You will notice, moreover, through all the Old Testament, that the Spirit was forever associated, according to the thinking of these men, with Jehovah Himself, working with Him in wonderful fellowship. I may quite reverently borrow the language of the letter to the Hebrews concerning the method of revelation in the past, to describe the method of the Spirit in the Old Testament as "at sundry times and in divers manners." The Spirit fell upon men, equipped them, passed away from them. As I look back over the history which the Old Testament reveals, I see the Spirit of God interpreting the will of God to men when they specially needed it, equipping men for their work in crisis. No system of teaching is given concerning His work, but He is often referred to; so I find through my Old Testament the presence of the Spirit in the history of men.

I come to the New Testament and immediately find that I am in a new age. One Man is presented to my view, born of the Spirit, anointed by the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, led by the Spirit; one Man Who passes before my view from Bethlehem to Calvary, all the while in living co-operation, fellowship, partnership, and harmony with the Spirit of God. During the last days of the life of that Man, I listen as He teaches the group of His disciples truth concerning the Spirit of God, to which men had never listened before. He told them distinctly what the mission of the Spirit should be, when presently, as the result of His own work, that Spirit should be given to men. He made a distinction which I want you to note, the Spirit would no longer visit them fitfully, but He would abide with them forever. He would no longer come to them for special revelation of the will of God, but He would remain to tell them the secrets of God in the common-places of life as well as at crises. He would no longer anoint them merely for some hour of crisis, some day of battle, some delicate piece of workmanship, but He would be with them all the days and all the hours, and in all places, in all the activities of life.

Jesus declared that the Spirit should be sent from the Father through Himself, as the result of His own work. He declared that the work of the Spirit should be that of making Him, Christ, living and real in the experience of men. His work was to be Christocentric in the profoundest sense of that word. To the disciples of Jesus, He was to reveal Jesus when He was absent in bodily presence, bringing to their minds all the things He had said, leading them into all the truth concerning the Christ. He was to be the advocate of the absent Christ in the lives of His disciples, and so their Comforter, strengthening them, disannulling the orphanage which they would experience when they lost the vision of His face and the sense of His human nearness.

He also declared that the Spirit would have a special mission in the world beyond His mission to the Church: "He, when He is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged."

We, therefore, have not to consider the ministry of the Spirit prior to the coming of Christ. We have to consider the ministry of the Spirit subsequent to that coming, in its new aspects, new relationships, new meanings, and new purposes, all of which result from the mission of the Christ.

Therefore, let it be understood that the work of the Spirit in the world is not to make Himself the consciousness of the Church, but to make Christ the consciousness of the Church. The work of the Spirit in the world is not to present Himself, or offer Himself to the world. The work of the Spirit in the world is to present Christ, to offer Christ to the world.

The Church of God all over the world is confronting a very subtle peril, that of putting the Spirit of God in a place of prominence that is entirely unwarranted by New Testament teaching. The movement associated with the phrase, the gift of tongues, at the present time has upon it the hallmark of hell. Let there be no mistake about this. The terror of it to my heart is that some of the sweetest saints of God, the very elect, are being deceived, because they lack this fundamental intelligence of what the mission of the Spirit really is. If the emphasis of any movement is on the Spirit and on gifts that prove the presence of the Spirit, know this, that according to the teaching of the Christ, that movement is out of harmony with the work of the Spirit. The work of the Spirit is to reveal Christ. The Spirit is the hidden Worker making the Christ Himself the supreme and overwhelming consciousness of believing hearts, the one and only Saviour of men who need salvation.

What then is the sin against the Holy Spirit? The answer to that inquiry can only be given as we thus understand the ministry of the Spirit. That is why I have taken so long in attempting briefly, yet nevertheless carefully, to declare what the work of the Spirit is. The sin against the Spirit is of persistent, willful rejection of His testimony concerning Christ. There are other passages in the New Testament which have created as much anxiety, as much doubt in the hearts of some Christian people, as has this great and wonderful word of Jesus. They are all passages that refer to the sin which has no forgiveness. You will find two of them in the letter to the Hebrews, one in the sixth chapter, verses four to six, "For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then apostatized," "fell away" I have upon the page, but I use the anglicized form of the Greek word because it helps us to understand the meaning of falling away, "it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance: seeing that they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame." It is quite evident that the sin for which there can be no repentance and for which there can be no forgiveness is that of rejection of the Son of God, as revealed and interpreted by the Spirit in that dispensation which had not dawned when Jesus uttered the warning, and which did not dawn until the day of Pentecost. If you turn on in this same letter to the tenth chapter you find another warning full of solemnity, "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgement and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. A man that hath set at nought Moses' law dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy," mark the sin, "who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace." I know there are other difficulties of interpretation and of exposition surrounding these two passages in Hebrews, with which I am not now proposing to deal. I have only read them that I may bring you face to face with the central thought they contain about the sin for which there can be no repentance and no forgiveness. What is the sin? The crucifixion of the Son of God afresh. The trampling under foot of the blood of the covenant, the counting of it as an unholy thing. How then do men commit that sin? By doing "despite unto the Spirit of grace." To state the case as from the other side. What is the sin against the Holy Ghost? The sin of deliberately refusing to accept His testimony. The sin of deliberately rejecting Christ in that hour in which Christ is presented to the conscience and will by the ministry of the Spirit, so that the conscience is sure of Christ, and the will is constrained toward Christ. Conscious and willful rejection of the Spirit's revelation of Christ is the only sin for which there never can be forgiveness.

Let me put this in another form. Had these men to whom Jesus spoke committed the sin? Certainly not. They were in the neighbourhood of sin. They had been undoubtedly convinced, in the presence of His work, of superhuman power, and they had charged it upon an unclean spirit. They were not guilty of the unpardonable sin. They had not committed blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, but He warned them. If you will suffer your sense of history to help you for a moment, you will see how presently the hour came in which He departed from the world, having left behind Him the circumstances of straitening and limitation. When the Spirit came to the disciples they knew Christ better than they had ever known Him when He had been amongst them in bodily form. On the day of Pentecost when the Spirit fell, sinners in Jerusalem came to a consciousness of the meaning of the mission of Christ which they had never gained while Christ Himself stood in bodily presence amongst them and preached. He warned these men, saying in effect, you may blaspheme My name, speak against the Son of God, and all your sin of that kind shall be forgiven, but there is a new ministry to commence, a new unveiling of My presence and power to be given to you, the Spirit is coming to convict, mark the word, "of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged." If you disobey that testimony, if you refuse to yield when the Spirit interprets the meaning of My mission, then there can be no forgiveness, because in that hour you reject the Saviour and forgiveness for all sin. The sin against the Holy Spirit then is that of final and willful rejection of the Lord Christ as He is presented to the heart of man by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. That sin is committed only when the Spirit is finally withdrawn from human life, and the Spirit of God is never withdrawn from human life until the choice has been made distinctly and irrevocably in full possession of all light. Never until that solemn and awful hour is the Spirit withdrawn, and never until that hour can man have committed the unpardonable sin.

Follow me patiently, one step further. That sin cannot be committed during probation. It is not a sin of an hour. It is not a sin of a moment. It is not a sin of an act. It is a sin of attitude, definitely, persistently taken, until the choice has become destiny. When does that hour come? It cannot come while men are still in the midst of light, in the midst of the operation of the Spirit. It never comes until man crosses the boundary between this life and the life which lies beyond. This is not the day of vengeance. It is the day of grace. I may have refused, disobeyed over and over again, time after time, but the Spirit does not leave me, it does not abandon me. I am here to make this affirmation to you with all confidence, basing it upon the whole revelation of the Bible, the Spirit never abandons a man while this life lasts. God has set a limit to probation. At that hour when man passes out of the present into the larger life that lies beyond, he crosses the boundary line.

Have you ever heard the Scripture of the Old Testament quoted, "My Spirit shall not always strive," in order to declare that it is possible for a man with whom the Spirit been striving for ten, twenty, thirty years, to be abandoned, so that he may live another ten years, lost. I declare that there is no warrant in Scripture for any such affirmation. Take that word, "My Spirit shall not always strive." It was a word of the old economy, as the Bible teaches us. It was a word used in the days when Noah preached righteousness before the flood came. When did the Spirit cease to strive with the men of Noah's day? Never until God shut Noah in, and shut them out, and the day of judgment immediately supervened. While he remained a preacher of righteousness, the Spirit was still striving with men. Lifting the ancient figure into our own age, remember this: God's Spirit never ceases to woo men until the hour comes when crossing over the line they enter upon the destiny they have created for themselves by their own choosing. If there has been no obedience to light, no response to the Spirit, then there is no forgiveness. It is the one and only sin for which there can be no forgiveness. All other sins shall be forgiven except that of refusing forgiveness by refusing the Saviour; the sin of blaspheming the Spirit, refusing His ministry, shutting the heart against His appeal, declining to answer the wooing tenderness of His ministry, or the warning severity thereof. If a man shall so choose and so rebel then the sin becomes age-abiding, it becomes eternal sin and there can be no forgiveness.

Yet hear me once again. Every time in which you refuse the Spirit's ministry you are sinning toward that sin. The final hour will never come while this life lasts. Where is that dividing line? Who shall mark it out for himself? Who shall know but that the Spirit so often refused will not be compelled to end His ministry ere the light of morning breaks because the day of opportunity shall have passed, as you shall have stepped from this room of time into the spacious halls of eternity and the spiritual world. The solemnity of the word needs to be upon our hearts. It may be that in very deed I am close to the border line, and so He who said, and said in virtue of His passion, in virtue of His cross and shame and dying, that all sins shall be forgiven, also said that if a man will not receive forgiveness by the ministry of the Spirit then there is no forgiveness, neither can there be, for the sin becomes age-abiding.

I read to you the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah. You remember when Christ passed into the synagogue and read the great words that indicated His own Mission, He read partly from that sixty-first chapter of Isaiah, Have you noticed where He ceased reading? "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath appointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord," and He closed the book and handed it back to the reader in the synagogue. If you will turn to the book of Isaiah you will find that our punctuation puts a comma where He stopped, and the next sentence is this, "and the day of vengeance of our God." But He did not read that, because He had not come then for the day of vengeance. He had come to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. Over nineteen hundred years have run their course, and the comma is still there, but it is only a comma. He will come again with flaming feet for "the day of vengeance of our God." Did you notice the next phrase in Isaiah? "To comfort all that mourn." That is not a mistake. Do not imagine that the prophet has lost his way in rhetoric. It is scientific. It is systematic revelation on the highest line. "The acceptable year of the Lord"! We are in it yet, men, women and children! Beyond it the day of vengeance, of judgment, the day of the Lord, of fire and sword, thank God, upon all oppressors, and upon all wickedness. Beyond that again is the comforting of the mourning, and the establishment of the Kingdom.

Why do I refer to all this in this particular connection? Because the principle is one that I want you to discover at this point. Jesus in this evening hour, in this sanctuary, to every man, woman and child, is fulfilling His ministry by the Spirit in proclaiming liberty to the captives and opening the prison doors to such as are bound, and proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord. There is only a comma there, and beyond it the day of vengeance of our God. Where does the comma end in your experience? When you pass out of the acceptable year. When you pass out of the gracious time, which the writer of the letter to the Hebrews describes by an ordinary word and which he dignifies with a capital letter, "Today." Ere morning breaks, some of us may have crossed the line. If to the end we have refused the ministry of the Spirit, have declined to let Him break chains and open prison doors and set us free, then mark the word of Jesus, we are the grip of eternal sin. There is no forgiveness. We pass out into the darkling void where we have lost the vision of God and the possibility of fellowship, and have become the companions of our own sins, dwellers with lust, that is, hungry, having no bread. The day of vengeance of our God has broken for no man or woman in this house.

Troubled heart, has the enemy been saying to you that you have committed the unpardonable sin? Nail that lie down in the presence of the Saviour. The fact that you are here; that your feet found their way here, even though you are filled with anxiety; the fact of the tender pain of conscience lest you may not be right with God; these are supreme evidences of the ministry of the Spirit wooing you toward the Saviour, attempting to persuade you to allow Him to loosen the bonds, unbar the doors, break the chains, and set you free. It is the acceptable year of the Lord.

Yet I could not be true to this text if I did not let my final word be its warning note. Forgiveness for all sin and blasphemy, but if I will not have forgiveness, then I commit the unpardonable sin, the sin of refusing the Christ Whom the Spirit presents. No one has committed it. Many may commit it ere a day or a week has passed. No one need commit it. Harden not your hearts while it is called Today, but answer the ministry of the Spirit Who is not making Himself the supreme consciousness of your thinking, but presents to you the Christ. Yield yourself to the Christ presented by the Spirit, and the Spirit will enter your life bringing with Him the value of Christ's death, the virtues of Christ's life, the victory of Christ's indwelling, and you will find your way into fellowship with God for life and for service.

May we feel the constraint of the Christ through the Spirit, and feeling it, yield to it, and be delivered from the sin that lays its eternal grip upon us so that there can be no forgiveness.