

Sunday, July 20, 2014

**“Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous *sins*; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.”
(Psalm 19:13)**

Often times, sins are divided into three categories: sins of ignorance, sins of infirmity, and sins of presumption. In many cases, there are blurry lines between these types of sins so they don't fall neatly into a single category, but in general terms:

- A *sin of ignorance* is one in which a person unknowingly sins, or truly believes that he is doing the right thing but is wrong. Paul says about himself that he “was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.” 1 Timothy 1:13.
- A *sin of infirmity* is one in which a person knows that what he is doing is a sin, but sins anyway due to the weakness of the flesh. Paul describes this in Romans 7:15 saying “for that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.”
- A *sin of presumption* is one in which a person knows that he is sinning and has a malicious heart against God and His commandments. He does it proudly, insolently, obstinately, boldly, and openly. I think of Numbers 25:6-8 when I think of a presumptuous sin: “And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.”

Today, I will spend some time focusing on presumptuous sins. But first let me make it clear that any sin is sufficient to condemn you to hell forever. Ignorance and infirmity are not excuses. Charles Spurgeon says: “All sins are great sins, but yet some sins are greater than others. Every sin has in it the very venom of rebellion, and is full of the essential marrow of traitorous rejection of God. But there be some sins which have in them a greater development of the essential mischief of rebellion, and which wear upon

their faces more of the brazen pride which defies the Most High. It is wrong to suppose that because all sins will condemn us, that therefore one sin is not greater than another. The fact is, that while all transgression is a greatly grievous sinful thing, yet there are some transgressions which have a deeper shade of blackness, and a more double scarlet-dyed hue of criminality than others. Now the presumptuous sins of our text are just the chief of all sins: they rank head and foremost in the list of iniquities.”

In the Mosaic Law, we read about presumptuous sins in Numbers 15:

“But the soul that doeth *ought* presumptuously, *whether he be* born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of the LORD, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity *shall be* upon him.”
(Numbers 15:30-31)

There was no sacrifice under the Mosaic dispensation for presumptuous sins. No atonement. No chance for repentance. No forgiveness. This should show how vile these sins are in the eyes of God.

Continuing on in Numbers 15, we have an example of a presumptuous sin:

“And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day. And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. And the LORD said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the LORD commanded Moses.”
(Numbers 15:32-36)

The man was gathering sticks. Kind of mundane. It doesn't seem like a big deal, does it? He wasn't hurting anyone...just gathering some sticks. But it's the *reason* that he was gathering the sticks that is the big deal. The reason behind your sin, whatever the sin is, is what makes it a presumptuous sin. This guy was gathering those sticks on the Sabbath because he despised the word of the Lord, and because he wanted to blaspheme God. God commanded “Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day.” (Exodus 35:3). This guy didn't need to gather those sticks – he did it for the sole purpose of showing the whole congregation his contempt for God and

announcing “I despise God and His commandments, so I’m going to make a big show by gathering some sticks to use for kindling on the Sabbath.”

There’s a good word that describes the reasoning behind this man’s presumptuous sin: contumacy. It means “stubborn perverseness or rebelliousness; willful and obstinate resistance or disobedience to authority.”

We see the same thing today when we hear of so-called “gay pride.” We see the same thing today when we hear of the whorish women in our generation wearing t-shirts proudly proclaiming “I had an abortion.” We see the same thing today when we hear of so-called “Christian” churches who are packed to the gills with proud adulterers who brag about their divorce and remarriage.

When we first started our picketing ministry, there was a woman in this city who was masquerading as a preacher at one of these churches. She got up and announced before God and everybody: “If the Bible says that sodomy is a sin, then to hell with the Bible!”

And one more example: Kevin Jennings, the co-founder of GLSEN (“Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network”). The purpose of GLSEN is to find ways to teach children in the public school system, starting in Kindergarten, that “it’s OK to be gay.” They hope to undo any teaching to the contrary that the children might get at home or in church. He is also Obama’s “Safe Schools Czar”. This wicked man said “Before, I was the one who was failing God; now I decided He was the one who had failed me. I decided I had done nothing wrong: He had, by promising to ‘set you free’ and never delivering on His promise. What had He done for me, other than make me feel shame and guilt? Squat. Screw you, buddy – I don’t need you around anymore!”

Now, turning to the New Testament:

“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. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the *world* to come.” (Matthew 12:31-32)

Mark's account is:

“Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.” (Mark 3:28-30)

This blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is called the unpardonable sin. Gill says “not every ignorant denial of, and opposition to his deity and personality; nor all resistance of him in the external ministry of the word; nor every sin that is knowingly and wilfully committed; but it is a despiteful usage of the Spirit of grace, an opposing, contradicting, and denying the operations wrought, or doctrines revealed by him, against a man's own light and conscience, out of wilful and obstinate malice, on purpose to lessen the glory of God, and gratify his own lusts: such was the sin of the Scribes and Pharisees; who, though they knew the miracles of Christ were wrought by the Spirit of God, yet maliciously and obstinately imputed them to the devil, with a view to obscure the glory of Christ, and indulge their own wicked passions and resentments against him.”

This sin is the worst presumptuous sin, committed after you, in your heart of hearts, know that the doctrines of God are true and that the Holy Ghost works in the hearts of men. I say that after you know this, you blaspheme and reproach God. Every other sin can be forgiven, but this one will never be forgiven. This one can never be repented of. There are several passages that shed light on this:

“For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers *is* rejected, and *is* nigh unto cursing; whose end *is* to be burned.” (Hebrews 6:4-8)

“For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment,

suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot 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?" (Hebrews 10:26-29)

"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth *it* empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation." (Matthew 12:43-45)

"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog *is* turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." (2 Peter 2:20-22)

"If any man see his brother sin a sin *which is* not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it." (1 John 5:16)

Now, some may ask, what about the perseverance of the saints? How can these people who have had this knowledge fall away? Well, they were never saints to begin with. They were professors and hypocrites. We have plenty of examples of people in the Bible who had great light and gifts from God, and yet were not saved. King Saul. Demas. Judas. Balaam. The righteous man in Ezekiel 33:12-13. The sinners and hypocrites in Zion in Isaiah 33:14. Those professors represented by the parable of the sower (the "way side", the "stony places", the "thorns"), and the tares in the parable of the wheat and tares, both in Matthew 13. Sooner or later these people will completely apostatize and it will be made manifest that they are not among the saints of God:

"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." (1 John 2:19)

“For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.” (1 Corinthians 11:19)

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” (Matthew 7:21-23)

Some little soul listening today may be concerned. “What if I have blasphemed the Holy Ghost? What if I have sinned presumptuously against my God after I have made a profession of faith in Him? What if I am one of these sinners and hypocrites in Zion?”

If you have blasphemed the Holy Ghost in ignorance, you can take comfort that Paul also ignorantly blasphemed and was forgiven:

“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, *be* honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.” (1 Timothy 1:12-17)

The elect of God, even after they have believed, continue to sin, and sometimes presumptuously (though we don't live in bondage to sin, or sin habitually and obstinately and joyfully as workers of iniquity do). See 1 John 1:8,10 vs. 1 John 3:6,9. I'm sure we have all sinned presumptuously at one time or another. As one of the commentators says: “Most men have committed some particular sin which they ought to deplore as long as they breathe, and on account of the enormity of which they should for ever be humbled. “

Take David, in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. David did a lot of sinning in his life, but God calls out this particular sin. The whole thing may have started as a sin of infirmity,

but you will be hard pressed to convince me that it didn't end as a presumptuous sin in the face of God. The prophet Nathan said:

“Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife *to be thy wife*, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.” (2 Samuel 12:9)

That language of “despising the commandment of the Lord” is very similar to the language in the law of the presumptuous sinner: “Because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken His commandment.” I believe that this is why, despite all of the sins of David, God draws special attention to this sin:

“Because David did *that which was right* in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any *thing* that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.” (1 Kings 15:5)

But David was forgiven by God.

Remember our original text for this sermon:

“Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous *sins*; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.” (Psalm 19:13)

This is a prayer of David, and this is the prayer that we should pray to God. We must ask God to keep us back from presumptuous sins, so they don't have dominion over us. This “great transgression” that David refers to here is, I believe, a final apostasy and blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Any presumptuous sins against God put us on the precipice of this great transgression, and without the mercy of God keeping us back, we would all be doomed. It is impossible for a saint of God, once enlightened by the Holy Ghost, to blaspheme the Holy Ghost, but “let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” 1 Corinthians 10:12.

I love you. Amen.