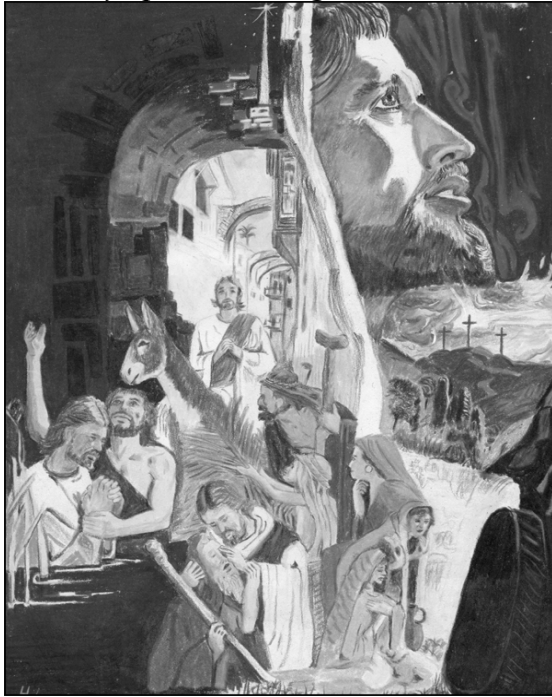


THE WORD – Part 9

The Holy Spirit & Change



In Matthew we read these words spoken by Jesus: “He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.” (See Matthew 12:30-32). A similar discourse resulting in this same statement is also recorded by Luke and Mark. Last month while I was researching Jesus’ statements about Himself as the Son of Man I read over our feature Scripture for this

month. Many of you who are Christians who read this site and know the Holy Spirit know how it is when you read something and are struck by the Spirit as to its relevancy for today. One of the first questions every young Christian asks their pastor is, “What is speaking against the Holy Spirit?” Eventually the next question ensues, “Have I committed the unpardonable sin?” Every young believer that I have ever known that is serious about Bible reading and study sooner or later asks one or both of these questions. Most often, depending upon that particular pastor’s church affiliation the answer will take one of two courses. If they are not ‘tongue talkers’ the minister will most often answer that speaking against any work of the Holy Spirit is a grave sin as well as outright cursing Him. If the minister is associated with a Holy Spirit baptized group they will include a discourse about speaking in other tongues as the work of the Holy Spirit that Jesus was talking about and speaking against that work as committing the unpardonable sin. Frankly, after reading the whole chapter of Matthew 12, in my opinion, both answers are correct. But that was not what struck me when I read this portion of Matthew recently. What struck me was the whole context of the passage in all three Gospels that we find these words recorded in.

Jesus is addressing who God says He is and His work here on earth. The religious leaders at that time, as a whole, do not agree with who and what Jesus says He is. There are those who have an open mind and those who do not. In at least two of the Gospels

they say that Jesus is aligned with a devil. That elicits this response from our Lord: “Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: ‘Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. If satan drives out satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.’” (See Matthew 12: 25-28) Jesus then goes on to talk about blaspheming the Holy Spirit, as we just previously read. When I read this portion of Scripture I was struck by all the work the Holy Spirit does do. It is God’s word spoken from His throne and at work on the earth that changes circumstances around us (John 1:1-3). When we come in agreement with His word, we see change. Quite often God will send mouthpieces (prophets) to enunciate this change or proclaim His desired word. Sometimes He will send someone to warn His people when they are missing His desired will. When we come in agreement with a true prophet, God’s will moves forward in our lives. When we refuse to come in agreement with His word, we refuse to come into agreement with a work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is not here in body on earth and neither is the Father, but the Holy Spirit is here in substance. It is the Holy Spirit’s job to reveal the word to us (John 14:15-17, 23-26). We know that word to be a person, Jesus Christ (John 1:1-17). Inherent in that word is the ability to see change.

When Jesus is invited into a situation things change. Now, not all change is as we expect. And not all change is from God. Here is a hard fact. When things are going good for the devil, he does not want things to change. When things are not going his way, he wants to see change. For us as human beings we have a hard time recognizing the difference. Even Spirit-filled believers have a hard time with change---does God want a change or doesn't He? So often we fail to recognize the work of the Holy Spirit in this process. The religious leaders of Christ's day failed to recognize the work of the Holy Spirit in what Jesus was doing. Christ alludes to the work of the Holy Spirit in Luke 12 as a baptism of fire. Today we recognize that as the evidence of speaking with other tongues, even though the Holy Spirit's baptism of fire encompasses so much more. But before that can take place, Jesus says He must go through a baptism of suffering (Luke 12:49-50). He then says that this will bring division for many. When we are not in agreement with God, His word and the work of the Holy Spirit on the earth, a work of division must take place in order for change to happen. Without this special work of the Holy Spirit we will not see God's kingdom in effect in substance on the earth. To call this work of the Holy Spirit the work of the devil is basically to be in agreement with how the religious leaders of Jesus' day described Him.

After reading this passage any clear thinking believer would immediately ask the question, "Have I committed the

unpardonable sin?" It is as we get older in Christ and no longer ask ourselves this that I believe we come close to actually committing this sin. As we spend years ministering or living in Christ we form opinions of events that fail to recognize the Holy Spirit's work in that event. For me personally, and other older believers that I have talked to recently, the thought that we could do that makes us shake in our boots. You step away from the magnitude of all that the Holy Spirit does on earth that we as humans have absolutely no idea of with an awe and healthy fear of God. The thought of all that He does that we have no knowledge of and could possibly mistake as a work of the devil, and then possibly proclaim that as such is frightening. I've often said that the devil is on God's leash. It was the devil's desire to kill Jesus. By all accounts he got what he wanted. Yet to blame it solely on the devil is shortsighted. Our sin placed Christ on the cross. God's judgment necessitates that someone pay for sin. One clear theme in these portions of Scripture is sin: The religious leaders of Jesus' day proclaim Him a sinner; their sin of misjudging the Holy Spirit and Christ, and our own potential for a future sin in blaspheming the Holy Spirit. When sin is in the camp, judgment follows. God does not judge us by beating us with a big stick. It's more like He turns His head for a moment in our time or takes His hand of protection away for a split second. It's during that period that the devil jumps in to bring disaster. As soon as we repent and cry out for forgiveness God starts the work of restoration in our lives. To blame the devil

for all of this is akin to blaming God for letting us commit evil. We refuse to see our own part in this process and refuse to assume responsibility for it.

If we will turn and repent, redemption can begin. We must consistently come in agreement with this work of redemption. At any one point along the way when we become wise in our own eyes or knowledgeable of our own ways and we no longer recognize all the ways in which God may allow circumstances, evil or good, to work out His final plan is when we can become capable of committing the unpardonable sin. It is quite confusing for me to walk into churches today or see believers today with devils in close contact with them. My initial reaction is to run out of the place or get away from that individual (and I have done that). There are other times when I perceive God is opening a door for deliverance (and then that takes place). Yet there are times when I ask God questions like, "Why? Why is this person here or in charge or why have you allowed this devil to remain or what do you want me to do right here and now with this situation?"

There is much division in the world and in America. There is much division in the church. Many church groups disagree over the word of God. As a result we are divided. This has been going on for centuries. I've often said if we can come in agreement over who Jesus is and all of His desired work on the earth (redeeming, healing, cleansing, delivering, etc.); we can see a good portion of the earth established in Christ's kingdom

principles. Jesus said no house divided against itself can stand. As Christians worldwide we need to come into agreement with God's word, at least concerning the basics, in order to see the blight of so much destructive sin obliterated from our midst. Whether we decide to divide or unite, either way, it is the next generation that will be affected. Jesus' words always amaze me, along with the way the Holy Spirit reveals His plans through that word. For those who have ever worked in youth ministry you know that what I am about to say has factored into your work at some point in time: Kids that come from a truly united home have it easier in life. When I say united, I don't just mean on the surface. I mean a deep seated desire to work together and see the other family member benefit. Even if a child squanders this treasure in their own life as they grow up, they usually have a better attitude in life, no matter what circumstances they experience, and they often fare better financially than those who never learn how to tap into this cache of wealth.

Look at Jesus' subsequent statements in our portion of Scripture in Matthew. "Make a tree good and its **fruit** will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit." In the next sentence He says of the religious leaders that do not come in agreement with God's work, "You **brood** of vipers..." In the next few sentences after these same leaders demand that He produce a miraculous sign to prove what He is saying is true, Jesus says to them, "A wicked and adulterous **generation** asks

for a miraculous sign!" As Jesus finishes this discourse the chapter closes with this event: "While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, 'Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.' He replied to him, 'Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?' Pointing to the disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.'" (See Matthew 12:33-50) The use of the words fruit, brood, generation, and the references to His own family, along with His future family of believers is no coincidence.

God's word reproduces God's kingdom. People make up a part of that kingdom and people reproduce people. This reproduces the generations of mothers and fathers and sisters and brothers---in the natural as well as the supernatural. Since God's word is the beginning of all reproduction (John 1:1-14), there are other forces on the planet trying to mimic or obtain this reproduction without the responsibility that we have as humans to the true word of God. Think about it. Whether it is a political campaign or a religious or cultic service; whether it is the thoughts of a doctor concerning your health or the advice of a loving relative or friend, each word reproduces some action, thought or feeling in our midst. Our enemy, the devil knows this. He thinks if he can get us to come in agreement with some form of his desire, he can forestall God's eventual plan. We all know that this will not happen---yet

it would seem from even a cursory reading of the Bible that there are times when coming in agreement with sin has produced results very different than God's immediate desire and as a result those individuals did not see the fruit or even the physical reproduction of a next generation that they could have. Instead they saw a brood of questionable quality and character. Individuals that immediately come to mind are Amnon and Absalom; Ahab and Jezebel; even the chosen leader of his next generation, Joshua. (Primarily because he neglected to raise up someone like himself that could lead the people, the next generation did what was right in their own eyes; Judges 2)

While we see the effect this has upon the world, we often fail to recognize this within the Christian community. In my opinion, this is where it counts. What must be the effect of taking money for the word of God or promoting oneself because of a word that should be prayed about quietly or written and/or shared without fanfare? At best this form of sin is a distraction from the true word of Christ and work of the Holy Spirit, which is to reproduce new believers and promote Jesus. In its worst form it reproduces witchcraft within our own midst because it substitutes human beings as idols. I'm not casting any dispersion upon any particular group or individual---it is God who will examine each of our own work and see if it is hay, wood or precious building material that can withstand His test. After all, it is just as much a work of the Holy Spirit to warn His people as it is to remain

silent and let them have their own desires. (Remember the time in Israel where the word of God was rare (1 Samuel 3:1) and everyone did what was right in their own eyes; or how about the '400 silent years' before John the Baptist came on the scene with Jesus?)

It is this that worries me: in this time of division in the world and the church what kind of change will be affected in the next generation of young believers because of all of this? We see what it has done in Europe and Canada. People cannot tell the difference between sin and love, light and darkness, true need and manipulation. As a result laws are enacted to govern the people in what they can preach, what they can see and how they should think. While many in the church lost the vision of Jesus in reproducing souls a blight of false religion has infested the world and the church. What can be done to put us right again? It is actually quite simple. Reach out to your neighbor, your relative or co-worker. Sit and talk with young believers (when I say young I mean in the faith, not necessarily in age). Help them understand the basics of bible study and the basics of a foundational walk with God. Start feeding people, both spiritually and physically. For those of you in Europe, Canada and parts of the Middle East, Asia and Africa, your pastor cannot do this. In many of these places you, the pew sitter are the only one that can reach your environment. While Christian television can be an enormous blessing, it does not reach people that cannot or will not view its programming. The same is true for those

that cannot or will not go into a church service.

I'm reminded of a situation two years ago here in America. I knew of a Christian school teacher who did what she could to bring the concepts of Christ into her work. Though, technically by law she was not allowed to witness in school, she did what she could to bring Christ to the young people. I had heard her talk about her work and some of these difficulties. It seemed, as she told it, that she wasn't really making much of an impact with her students. A year or so went by and a pastor's daughter approached me to exchange teaching her how to ride a horse for doing some of my barn work here on the farm. Besides this ministry, our small outreach house in another town, as well as my husband's business, we also have a farm. As a result, I am always looking for opportunities to free up my time for the Gospel. As the young lady came out to the farm and she began telling me her story, I discovered that this Christian school teacher that I had known from some time back had been one of her teachers in school. This young lady started to tell me the story of the impact this woman had made on her class and the change to the environment of the classroom that had been made from the previous teacher (who had been somewhat ungodly). Not only had she changed the environment for learning, it changed attitudes toward the Gospel and the understanding of the church's role in American history. My mind flashed back to my discussions with this school teacher, who also happened to be a young mother of

four children, ranging in ages from 5 to 17. I never knew how she found the time for her children as well as work a teaching job. She seemed guilt ridden for not exactly being able to preach the Gospel, yet satisfied that she could do something. As my young 'barn worker' started to share how awesome this woman had been to the class, it was obvious to me that the Holy Spirit would be able to use this teacher's words in the lives of these students for many years to come. Who knows what work the Holy Spirit could do and what part of the kingdom of God could be reproduced as other believers would come in contact with these young people in the future?

This is my point: You have the ability to change the environment you live in no matter who or what government runs your country. Yes, it is easier in some countries than it is in others. But as Spirit-filled believers we have the word of God that can make a difference as long as we are willing to let the word of God be the star and run the show. His word is eternal. It lifts up kings and removes kings, changes societies and affects laws and judges. Will we speak His word with purity or use it for our own agenda? Will we speak, share or write His word and allow Him to bring it to pass as He sees fit within His own time frame and in His own understanding? I encourage you with these words from Isaiah as God encouraged me when I thought all the work He had called me to do for His kingdom was lost: "Though you were ruined and made desolate and your land laid waste, now you will be too small for your people, and those

who devoured you will be far away. The children born during your bereavement will yet say in your hearing, 'This place is too small for us; give us more space to live in.' Then you will say in your heart, 'Who bore me these? I was bereaved and barren; I was exiled and rejected. Who brought these up? I was left all alone, but these---where have they come from?'" Be encouraged this month as you minister to the Lord and then minister to your fellow man. **Log on next month for more.....**

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