

How Not To Be A Hypocrite

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[0 : 0 0] In Luke chapter 12, I'll read it out loud for us. In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together, that they were trampling one another, he began to say to his disciples first, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed. Or hidden that will not be known. Therefore, whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light.

And what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops. I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do.

But I will warn you whom to fear. Fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not.

[1 : 1 4] You are of more value than many sparrows. And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God.

But the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven.

But the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say.

For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say. This is God's holy and authoritative word. In the preceding passage, Jesus preached a very hard-hitting sermon denouncing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and the scribes.

And he denounced the fact that they pretended to be righteous on the outside, even though they were wicked and sinful on the inside. He denounced the fact that they moralistically and legalistically kept the minutia of the law while neglecting the most important commands of God's word.

[2 : 3 0] He denounced the fact that they sought these prominent seats and long praises from people rather than humbly seeking God's glory. So in today's passage, Jesus transitions from denouncing the Pharisees and the scribes to addressing his own disciples.

And he warns them about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and the scribes and then teaches them how not to be hypocrites like they were. And Jesus' main point is this.

The fact that all will be revealed and judged by God enables us to be authentic witnesses, followers of Christ, even in the midst of persecution.

That's his main point. And I'm going to unpack that by looking at the way Jesus exposes the way compartmentalize our lives. And we're going to look at the public space versus private space, temporal death versus eternal death, earthly court versus the heavenly court.

So let's first look at the public space and the private space that Jesus speaks of. In verse 1, In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, he began to say to his disciples first, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

[3 : 41] Jesus is getting so popular here. This is like a Black Friday shopping mad dash where people literally trample each other because they're trying to get into a store and find the items that they want to get the best deals.

People are literally trampling each other because Jesus has become so popular and there's throngs of people that are crowding to see him. And as this is happening, we've been noting the rising popularity of Jesus throughout the Gospel of Luke, but there's always this lingering sense that that popularity will not last.

This bubble is going to burst at some point. And instead of, you know, regaling the crowds with an entertaining message, Jesus issues a solemn warning, and then he speaks to his disciples first, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

The word leaven is used more generically nowadays in our culture to refer to all kinds of leavening agents, like yeast, and anything that causes fermentation and the expansion of the dough in baking.

So sometimes when we hear leaven, we think of yeast, but it's a much more restricted word than that. Leaven is a fermented dough that's taken from an old batch of dough that's set aside and combined with the new batch of dough.

[5 : 01] And since that old batch is already fermenting, you can use that to produce fermentation in the new batch of dough. And so, because yeast was very rare in the ancient world. And so all you need is that first batch that's fermented, and then you could make fermented dough, you know, you could bake bread all you want.

The danger, of course, with this kind of baking method is that with each subsequent bread that you make, the chance of dangerous bacteria growing in that bread increases. And this health concern using old leaven may have been behind, may have been one of the reasons behind the command that God gave to the Israelites in Exodus 12 to observe the feast of unleavened bread, where for seven days they would purge their houses of all leavened bread and eat only unleavened bread, so they could start up that fermentation process anew.

And so because of that practice among the Jews, the word leaven came to represent for them how sin and evil can spread insidiously among the people of God until it has affected the entire dough.

So on the outside, the Pharisees' religiousness looked wholesome, but inside there were like dangerous bacteria lurking that could infect the entire population.

And so Jesus warns them, beware of such hypocrisy. Make sure you're wholesome on the inside, not just on the outside. And then in verses 2 to 3, Jesus gives the reason why such authenticity is important.

[6 : 37] Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed. Therefore, whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops.

Nothing is covered up. All will be revealed. Of course, we're careful about how we speak to each other on a polite Sunday morning. But if we speak harshly to our spouse or to our children behind closed doors, that will be made known.

Perhaps we appear chaste and self-controlled on the outside, but inside our imagination, in the seclusion of our dorm rooms, or on the private browsers of our laptops, we indulge forbidden lusts.

This too will be revealed. If we compartmentalize our lives to public spaces and private spaces and only care about the public perception and not about the private, the reality that we live in, we will be shocked and ashamed on the day when God brings all things to light.

And this is true not just of evil things, but also of good things. The secret prayers that you utter on behalf of your brothers and sisters in your room.

[8 : 13] The good deeds that you do on behalf of the poor that no one else sees, all of that too will be revealed on that great day. That's an encouragement.

This is such a needful tonic in our toxic celebrity culture. Nowadays, in order to get a book published, amassing a large social media following is more important than writing a good book.

Nowadays, image control trumps character and self-control. Nowadays, just because people jump on the bandwagon and then affix the appropriate hashtags on the social media posts for, say, Black History Month or Women's History Month, people delude themselves into thinking that all of a sudden now they're activists and revolutionaries.

when in reality, in the reality of their day-to-day lives, they don't give a rip about equality.

Anyone can curate a glowing social media profile, but who are you for real? What do you say and do when no one is looking?

[9 : 42] Divine omniscience, the fact that God knows all things, divine omniscience motivates Christian authenticity. Because God sees everything, we live every moment before the watching eyes of God.

This is what ancient Christians used to call *coram deo*. In Latin, it's a phrase that means in the presence of God, before the face of God. We live every moment before the face of God, under the authority of God, to the glory of God.

That's how we ought to live as Christians. Some of you might think, oh man, that sounds quite stressful, constraining your life that way, trying to live a blameless life as if God's watching you at every moment.

But actually, quite the opposite is true. Think about it. It's liberating to be blameless. It's people who are always violating the traffic rules, speeding and running by red lights, that panic when they see a police car.

They're always anxious. If you're always driving and observing the rules, you don't panic when you see a police car. It's the people, right, who gossip, slander people behind their backs, who are always afraid of being backstabbed by their friends and fear that other people are talking behind their back.

[11 : 09] It's people who are constantly trying to take advantage of others for their selfish gain, that are always living in perpetual fear that people are trying to cheat them, that are trying to take advantage of them.

It's the people who have mixed motives, ulterior motives, when they do things, that are always afraid of being exposed for the fraud that they are.

Only people with integrity who live the outside and inside the same way can live with freedom. Only they can live with freedom and without fear.

That's what God's calling us to. The fact that all will be revealed and judged by God enables us to be authentic witnesses of Christ in public and in private. That's the point that kind of undergirds the next two points that Jesus makes.

First, the second contrast is a temporal death versus eternal death. Because if we live authentic Christian lives, we will face persecution from a world that is opposed to Christ.

[12 : 13] And aware of this, Jesus gives us stern warnings on the one hand, but also warm assurances that can sustain us and help us to persevere. So let's look at verses 4 to 7 where he distinguishes the temporal death and eternal death and tells us to be mindful not just of the temporal death, but also of the eternal death.

I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear. Fear him who after he has killed has authority to cast into hell.

Yes, I tell you, fear him. Fear of death is really the most basic kind of primal fear that drives us, right? We fear the physical harm that people can do to us.

But here in the United States where we enjoy freedom of religion, we need not fear being killed for our faith like many of our brothers and sisters throughout the world. Not like the disciples of Jesus.

They have to worry about that. But we nevertheless can fear what people might do to us when we live authentic lives of witnessing for Jesus Christ.

[13 : 24] We can fear character assassination. We fear that by sharing the saving news of Jesus Christ with our friends and neighbors that we'll be seen as ignorant and superstitious.

We fear that by standing up for biblical truth that we will be seen and will be caricatured as these backwards bigots. We fear that by being a public Christian in academia that we will forfeit our respectability and jeopardize our careers.

Sometimes our fear is even less direct. We cheat or plagiarize at school. Misrepresent our reading reports because we fear that people will give us bad grades that will then give us bad jobs.

We fear what people might do to us. We flatter our managers and help them carry out unethical business practices because we fear their retaliation.

And we desire the promotion that they can give us. But why do we fear what men can do to us more than what God can do to us?

[14 : 43] God is watching and our actions here and now will echo into eternity and that's what Jesus is reminding us of here. When the 16th century Scottish pastor and reformer, John Knox, died and he was being buried, lowered to his grave, the presiding minister apparently has said to have said this about the man, John Knox.

Here lies one who feared God so much that he never feared the face of man. He who fears God will fear no man.

And in order to emphasize the contrast of fearing man and fearing God, once we are told, do not fear men, do not fear those who kill the body and after that can do nothing else.

But three times we're told to fear God. Fear God who after he has killed has authority to cast into hell. Fear. Fear, fear him. And this is the only time that Luke uses the word hell in this, in his entire gospel.

And the Greek word for hell is named after a valley of Hinnom in kind of south of Jerusalem. And that was the place in earlier history of Israel that these idol worshipers burned their own children in sacrifice.

[15 : 58] And it became a desecrated place. And for that reason, the valley was used as a trash heap. They would dump all the trash, all the carcasses of dead animals and all the executed criminals, their bodies would be dumped there and it would all be burned.

So it was said by historians of the ancient world that there was always smoke rising up from the valley of Hinnom. It's a picture, an apt picture of the eternal destruction that awaits evildoers who refuse to repent of their sins.

The temporal harm that people can do to us is nothing compared to the eternal hell that God consigns evildoers to. So why should we fear what men say about us?

Whatever they might do to us, it will only be for this life, this momentary life. We need not fear their threats. No human, no matter how powerful or authoritative, have any authority to decide our eternal fate.

That's God's exclusive prerogative. And we can rest in that. Some of us might object at this point, well God, that's great.

[17 : 14] That's great that our eternal life is in your hands. And you're right that that's more important than how we fare in this life. But what about this life? That's great that I'll enjoy heavenly inheritance and riches, but what if I'm poor and hungry now?

That's great that I'll be safe in eternity, but what if I'm afraid and feel threatened right now? Eternity seems off in the distance, but this right now, that's immediate.

The pain is real. The fear is crippling. How can I get through this life? Jesus anticipates that objection and answers it in verses six to seven.

Having reminded us of God's authority over our eternal future, Jesus also reminds us of God's care for us in the present. He says, Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies?

And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why? Even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not.

[18 : 25] You are of more value than many sparrows. This is amazing. God is saying, in essence, you concern yourself being my faithful witness and don't worry about anything else.

Don't worry about protecting yourself, fending for your own life, worrying about the people who might persecute you and kill you. I'll take care of that. A sparrow is one of the smallest, most common, and cheapest birds.

They're all over the place. Maybe you're more familiar with pigeons in the city. They're not valuable.

I think I see a roadkill of a pigeon every week somewhere around the Twin City Plaza. No one pays any heed. They just walk right by it. The only thing they care about is that they don't step on it. They don't care about the pigeon.

Nobody cares about that pigeon. It's worthless, essentially. But God says, no, not even one of those pigeons, not even one of those sparrows is forgotten by me.

[19 : 36] Similarly, God says, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. According to my quick Google search, that's all research is nowadays, isn't it?

It's kind of sad. But I didn't need to look very far for this. An average human head has about 100,000 hair follicles. And each follicle grows about 20 individual hair in its lifetime.

And so we lose hair all the time, right? They say that we lose about 100 strands of hair per day. Literally, if you've ever cleaned your house, you have found hair. They're everywhere. And hair grows back.

And there's so much of it. So you don't care. You don't care about losing hair. They always grow back, unless you're a middle-aged man who's genetically predisposed to losing hair. But the point is, but the point is, hair is cheap.

No one's going to pay your money for it. In fact, you have to pay someone to cut it for you. But guess what? God has every single strand of your hair numbered. He knows how tens of thousands of hairs, how many of them are on your head.

[20 : 56] And when one is lost, He knows it is not forgotten by Him. And this is the point. If God cares about a sparrow, if God cares about a strand of hair on your head, how much more than does God care for you?

How much does God care for you? The pinnacle of His creation. Man and woman creating an image of God. How much does God care for you?

And you think that God doesn't care what that man did to you those years ago? You think God doesn't care what that woman said to you last week?

You think God doesn't care that you're sick? You think God doesn't care how that person made you feel? You think God doesn't care that your job is miserable? You think God doesn't care that you are depressed and suicidal?

You think God doesn't care about the desires of your heart? That He doesn't know about your knees? That He doesn't care that you are lonely? He doesn't care that your life is hard?

[22 : 09] Don't believe those lies of the enemy. God cares about you. He knows the number of hair on your head. He cares for the sparrow.

He's never forgotten about you and He will never forget you.

Are you following the logic of verses 4 to 7? Don't fear those who can kill only the body. God can cast into hell. Prioritize eternity.

Prioritize heaven. And don't worry about your life on earth. Don't worry about how people might mistreat you and kill you because of your faith in me. I'll take care of that. I'm keeping a close watch over you.

God's not like this, you know, bad, selfish boss who says, you know, hey, sacrifice your health. Sacrifice your work-life balance. Sacrifice your family. Do everything. Focus only on increasing the profit margin of the company because that's your job and if you don't do it, I'm going to fire you.

[23 : 12] That's not the kind of manager or boss God is. God's the kind of boss who says, hey, I'll take care of everything else. I'll make sure you make enough money. I'll take care of your family.

I'll make sure you have health benefits. I'll take care of everything else. You just worry about doing the job I've given you. We can be preoccupied with heaven because God has promised to take care of us on earth.

We can seek first the kingdom of God because God has promised to meet our needs here in the kingdom of man. And unless we believe that, unless we believe that God will take care of us, we cannot live for God with sacrifice and abandon.

Now, this does not mean that you will never know hardship and never be persecuted. Jesus' earlier exhortation not to fear those who kill the body shows that there are people who will kill the followers of Jesus.

The story of Jesus' apostles in the book of Acts, which is Luke's sequel to his gospel, we see many of them martyred for their faith. But this does mean that when you are suffering for his namesake, that when you are going through trials, when you are being persecuted for your faith, you can be assured that he is with you.

[24 : 41] He is not far off. He is near. He is engaged. He is involved. This past Wednesday during our weekly prayer service, we looked at Psalm 116 together.

In Psalm 116, verse 15, it says, Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. The word precious there means rare, costly, weighty.

It's the exact opposite idea of what the pagans used to say in the ancient world. They used to say, Whom the gods love die young. You have a man who dies young or a child that dies. Oh, it's because gods must love them.

They want them with him. That's what the pagans said. What the Bible taught was exactly the opposite. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. No, God does not take the death of his saints casually.

It's weighty to him because you are valuable to him. It's costly to him. He cares about it so you can be assured that when you are being persecuted and if you ever had the privilege of being martyred for your faith in Jesus Christ, that God is with you.

- [25 : 47] He's watching you. He loves you and he cares for you. I've used this quote before but as Charles Spurgeon once said, The refiner is never far from the mouth of the furnace when his gold is in the fire.

When you're in the fire of trial, you are being persecuted. You're hurting. You can be sure that the heavenly father is not far away. Next in verses 8 to 12, Jesus gives us another stern warning followed by a warm assurance so that we might be authentic witnesses for Christ even in the midst of persecution.

He says in verses 8 to 9, And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the son of man, also will acknowledge before the angels of God. But the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

The word acknowledge is sometimes translated as declare or confess. And it refers to a public profession of faith. Everyone who acknowledges me before men, it's public.

The son of man also will acknowledge before the angel of God. The Christian faith is intended to be public, not private. This is not a matter of personal opinion.

- [27 : 12] It's a matter of universal truth. You can see this clearly in John chapter 12, verses 42 to 43. It says, Nevertheless, many, even of the authorities, believed in him.

They believed in Jesus. But for fear of the Pharisees, they did not confess it. so that they would not be put out of the synagogue.

For they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. The word translated confess here is the exact same word as the word acknowledged in our passage.

So you see the contrast between believing in secret and confessing in public. There were Jewish authorities who believed in Jesus secretly.

but for the fear of the Pharisees that they might be persecuted by them and be excommunicated by them, they did not confess Jesus publicly.

- [28 : 13] And John's assessment of them is not good. They loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. They were not true followers of Jesus because they were ashamed of Christ and his words.

They loved the glory of man more than the glory of God. That's why in Romans 10 also, 9-10, it says, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

For with the heart one believes and is justified and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. Believing in the heart is not enough. You must also confess with your mouth.

Genuine faith in Jesus Christ radically reorients all of our purposes and priorities from top to bottom.

It's a new allegiance that is life-altering. It's impossible not to confess it. Can you imagine a man telling a woman, hey, let's just sign the papers privately and get married?

- [29 : 28] Make sure you don't call me honey in public. Don't hold my hands in public. Let's get married, but hey, don't tell me, but don't change your status on Facebook.

Keep it single. Definitely don't tell my parents because they might disapprove. And a ring, oh yeah, you definitely can't wear that. Can you imagine a man saying that to a woman?

You think the woman will say, yes, I'd love to marry you? That's not a marriage. You're demonstrating by all of your public acts that your wife is not the most important person in your life.

You're demonstrating by all of your public acts that you are not in an exclusive covenant relationship with that woman. because if you're truly married, you can't help but publicly declare you live together.

You love each other. You serve one another. You enjoy intimacy with each other that you don't share with anyone else in the whole wide world. How can that not be public?

[30 : 39] Acknowledging Christ is similar. When we become a Christian, we accept Jesus Christ as a Savior and Lord over our lives. everything we say and do is now for His glory and not our own glory.

We love Him more than we love anyone else in the whole world. How can a true Christian live without acknowledging Christ? Without confessing Him?

It's impossible. Jesus is repeating the same thing He said earlier in different words in Luke 9, 26. Whoever is ashamed of me and my words of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in His glory and the glory of the Father and of the Holy Angels.

So are you ashamed of Christ and His words? Do you believe in Christ secretly in your heart but never confess Him with your mouth? I think this is also another reason why baptism is so important.

It's a public profession of faith. Do people in your life know that you're a Christian? Now don't get me wrong.

[31 : 45] Jesus is not saying that if you ever deny Christ before men that He will deny you forever in the heavenly court. You just do it once and I'll deny you forever. That's not what He's saying. If that were the case no one in this whole world would be saved.

We have all two varying degrees deny Jesus. At a work social a co-worker takes the name of our Lord Jesus in vain and uses His name as a swear word but you don't defend the honor of your Savior's name and you feel a tinge of guilt.

During lunch your classmates mock the fundamental tenets of Christianity but then you fearing embarrassment and ostracism you maintain a shameful silence. At a neighborhood barbecue your neighbor asks you a question that sets you up perfectly for you to talk about your faith and share the good news of Jesus but instead because of your fear you utter general pleasantries and platitudes that are just shallow enough to be safe not to offend anybody else.

These are all varying shades of denial of failure to confess Jesus Christ. Our denial can of course be much more obvious. Peter the first disciple of Jesus and the leader among the twelve apostles later in Luke chapter 22 publicly denies Jesus three times the same day.

And yet we know that his faith ultimately did not fail because Jesus prayed for Peter earlier in Luke that that his faith may not fail.

[33 : 27] And after his denials it says that Peter went out and wept bitterly. Why? Because he still believed in Jesus and loved him and was heartbroken that he had failed.

Peter's denial was a temporary lapse of courage not a permanent loss of conviction. So Peter repented of his denials and Jesus not only restored him as the disciple but also reinstated him as an apostle the leader among the apostles.

But if you are unrepentant in your denial of Jesus Christ if you refuse to confess Christ before man because you lack genuine faith if you deny Christ before man due to the absence of true conviction then Jesus will also deny you in the heavenly court on the day of judgment.

Jesus takes this one step further in verse 10 and everyone who speaks a word against the son of man will be forgiven but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

The unforgivable sin. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. It's also mentioned in Matthew chapter 12 verses 22 to 32 and in Mark chapter 3 verses 20 to 35 and it's helpful to examine those parallels because they give us a little more context than Luke does here in our passage.

[34 : 59] In both Matthew and Mark Jesus says this in the context of an exorcism. Jesus casts out a demon from a man and the man is healed and the Pharisees and the scribes who observe that then say it then slander the work of the Holy Spirit by saying that Jesus is casting out demons not by the power of the Holy Spirit but by Beelzebul the prince of demons which then prompts Jesus to say that blasphemy against the Spirit is an unforgivable sin.

So even though it's a little removed in our present context that's actually the context that precedes this passage also in Luke 11. But the detail that Mark provides in particular is very illuminating in Mark 3 verses 28 to 30 it says So that gives us a clue as to what the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is.

If we were to define it we can define it this way blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is a decisive rejection of the manifestation the demonstration of God's saving power through the Holy Spirit.

You experience it you witness the powerful demonstration the manifestation of the saving power His presence and then you turn around and say that is not God.

If you examine the larger context of Mark 3 it yields even further insight that passage is structured as a famous Markan sandwich. In a typical sandwich you have bread on top and you have bread on the bottom and you have the goodies in the middle right?

[37 : 00] You have the meat in the middle or the vegetables. Mark frequently inserts a story in between in the middle of another story and he uses those two bread pieces to highlight to explain and emphasize the stuff that's in the middle and that's what that passage is about the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit and you can see the sandwich structure here.

First Jesus' family says that Jesus is out of his mind that's what you see that's the top bread and then scribes say that Jesus is possessed by Beelzebul and Jesus teaches that while all other blasphemies even blasphemies against him included can be forgiven but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never have forgiveness but he's guilty of eternity and now the bottom bread which is a continuation of the top bread Jesus' family then because they think he's out of his mind they stage an intervention they're trying to help him he's out of his mind let's help him stop him they go to try to stop him and then Jesus says no my true family is not just my biological family it's actually those who believe and obey the word of God how does this help to explain the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit the family of Jesus is an example of blasphemy against the Son of Man they say he's out of his mind he's crazy he's not Son of God yet they can be forgiven they're ignorant they need to repent and believe but they can be forgiven and they are later they come to faith in Jesus but the scribes and the Pharisees they're blaspheming against the Spirit they have witnessed the powerful presence the saving activity of the Spirit and after having tasted it after having seen it with their own eyes they say no that is of the devil that's not God

I think the blasphemy against the Spirit is unforgivable because it's unique because of the Spirit's unique role within the triune Godhead the Father plans our redemption the Son accomplishes our redemption and the Spirit manifests our redemption the Spirit bears witness to Christ it's the Spirit that manifests the power of God it's the Spirit that applies the salvation of God it's the Spirit that pours out the love of God into our hearts it's the Spirit that enlightens the eyes of our hearts so that we might have knowledge of God it's the Spirit that brings about that final stage of our redemption of our repentance and faith and so when you come to face the very reality and power of the Spirit of God and you decisively reject it there's nothing left for you you're foreclosing the possibility of future repentance there's no turning back there may be some of you who are wondering whether or not you have ever committed this eternal unforgivable sin so I want to offer some clarification assurance for those of you who are thinking in that way and I think the passages that speak of the sin of apostasy in the book of Hebrews are related for example it says in Hebrews 6:46 it is impossible in the case of those who have once been enlightened who have tasted the heavenly gift that's the Spirit and have shared in the Holy Spirit and have tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the age to come and then have fallen away to restore them again to repentance since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding Him up to contempt notice that those who reject

God after having experienced the Holy Spirit in some measure cannot then be restored to repentance they cannot repent hence there is no forgiveness Hebrews 12 uses Esau as an example of this it says that oh sorry I didn't display the rest of that quote earlier Hebrews 12 uses Esau as an example it says for you know that afterward when he desired to inherit the blessing he was rejected for he found no chance to repent though he sought it with tears so Esau if you remember he despised his birthright and sold his birthright to his younger brother Jacob for a bowl of soup and then when it came time for his father to pass and before that to bless their children especially his elder son he still wanted the elder son's blessing even though he had despised his birthright but he gets deceived and Jacob takes the blessing and Esau is dejected and this is what he says to his father what about me in Genesis 27:30

Esau said to his father have you but one blessing my father bless me even me also my father and Esau lifted up his voice and wept what is Esau crying for he's not crying for repentance he's crying for the blessing Esau never repents he had no chance to repent or more literally no place to repent as the NASB translates he never repents he's unable to come to repentance so then if you are wondering whether you have committed the unforgivable sin my exhortation to you is repent of your rebellion against God repent of your denial of Christ repent of your sins as Acts 3:9 says repent therefore and turn back that your sins may be blotted out if you repent then there is forgiveness those who blaspheme the Holy

[42 : 56] Spirit decisively turn away from God despite their experience of him and there is nothing that can restore them to repentance they cannot and will not repent so you repent if you do you can be assured of the forgiveness of Christ and those who by all external appearances seem like deviled followers of God like the Pharisees and the scribes can so harden their hearts that they blaspheme the Holy Spirit and never repent that's why we have the book of Hebrews the whole thing is about warning believers against apostasy and persevering to the end true Christians are those who persevere in faith and obedience until the end that's what we are told in Hebrews to exhort one another every day as long as it is called today so that none of us may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin for if we have come to share in

Christ we have come to share in Christ if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end we need each other we need to exhort each other because the deceitfulness of sin can seep in it can harden our hearts gradually until we are weaned away from the love of Christ altogether all true Christians persevere to the end God guarantees that he holds us fast but we don't have God's perfect omniscient perspective so our job is to grow in our assurance of salvation by growing in our perseverance in faith and obedience but as he did in the preceding verses after stern warning Jesus gives us a comforting assurance in verses 11 to 12 and when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say for the

Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say so when you are arrested for bearing witness to Jesus and brought to jail brought to trial for before the rulers and authorities he says don't be anxious spirit of God the spirit himself will help you and speak through you rather than you speaking against the Holy Spirit this is a wonderful promise and we see it's fulfillment throughout the book of Acts in Acts chapter 4 Peter who had formally denied Jesus three times is taken to the authorities and placed on trial and he says there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved Jesus alone is your hope and then when they threaten him and charge him never to speak in the name of Jesus again he says you tell me whether I should obey man or obey God and he continues to go on preaching that's the power of the spirit to embolden his disciples and to give them assurance sometimes in a passage like this we can get stuck on our high obligations and miss the even loftier promises of

God but I want to remind you of these lofty promises don't fear men though they might persecute and kill you because of your allegiance to Christ that's the command but here's the comfort God the father is the ultimate eternal judge and he who is the cosmic ruler of the universe is not too preoccupied with running the world to forget about you he has the hairs of your head numbered he will never forsake you don't deny Christ before men if you do you will be denied by him on judgment day that's the command but here's the comfort if you acknowledge Christ before feeble fickle men Christ will acknowledge you before the angels of God before the throne of God himself Christ will be your unfailing and unchanging advocate we're sinful and unworthy and if you imagine on the day of judgment we stand before the all-knowing eyes of

God we're going to feel very exposed we're going to feel naked and Satan and Satan the accuser will surely point at us and say well you see all his sins you see all her shortcomings but Jesus will stick out his neck for us on that day if you acknowledged him here on earth Christ will say yes that sinful man is a child of God yes that weak woman is a child of God and they are to be counted as righteous in the throne room of God in the heavenly court because I paid for their sins because I clothed them with my righteousness because I washed them with my blood that's the comfort that God gives to people who acknowledge him on earth that's a comfort that I hope to offer to all of you but some of you have not yet put your faith in

[48 : 21] Jesus Christ and I can't offer you those comforts I want to offer you those comforts confess Jesus Christ today repent of your sins and finally don't blaspheme against the Holy Spirit for there's no repentance and forgiveness beyond that that's the command but here's the comfort the spirit of the living God himself will dwell within you the spirit who directs the course of human history will himself personally guide you step by step and give you the words to say this wonderful promise the fact that all will be revealed and judged by God enables us to be authentic witnesses of Christ even in the midst of persecution of church to ■ to