

Luke 12:8-12—“And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God,⁹ but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God.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.¹¹ 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,¹² for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

Words have power. Words can build up, encourage, give hope and inspire, or they can tear down, discourage, and dishearten. Jesus teaches us that words have the power to reveal what is in your heart. **Luke 6:45**—*The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.* What we truly think and believe, deep within the heart, will be revealed in what we say.

In context of this passage, the connection between the heart and the mouth has been in view in Jesus’ interaction with the Pharisees. The Law experts, with their imposition of ritual burdens on the people, say these things you must do to please God, but they themselves, don’t do them. They say one thing but do another and reveal that their hearts are full of hypocrisy. Jesus, on more than one occasion, gives the warning that what we say in private will one day, on the Day of Judgement, be declared for all to hear. Our words will either condemn us or acquit us. The words that will acquit are words of faith in Jesus and his work, words that arise from a heart that has been made new by the grace of God. But here is a crucial part to grasp; our confession of faith must be made before men before we face God in judgement.

Have you confessed your faith in Jesus before people? When a person joins Fairfield church as a member, they make a profession of faith before the elders, who question them about their faith and relationship to Christ. Then, before the congregation they confess their faith by giving ascent to questions that express the essentials of what it means to possess faith in Jesus.

This morning we consider Jesus’ promise to acknowledge us before the angels, blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit’s teaching us words to say before those who would harm us. All these reveal the intimate connection between the heart and the mouth.

OUR LORD'S PROMISE TO ACKNOWLEDGE US BEFORE THE ANGELS

Verse 8—*“And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, . . .*

What a wonderful promise! When a person takes the time and makes the effort to learn your name and speaks well of you in the presence of others, it is an encouraging experience. But imagine hearing your name from the lips of Jesus, declaring you as His brother or sister before the angels of God. ***The thought of this should bring inexpressible joy! But that is not all.***

Matthew records that Jesus will declare your name before His Heavenly Father as well. The context shows that this is a different occasion, but a similar sentiment. He encourages His disciples not to be afraid. **Matthew 10:29-33**—*Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. ³² So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, ³³ but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.*

And there we have a condition! Jesus' acknowledgement of us before God the Father and His angels depends on our confessing our faith in public before men and women, family, friends, and neighbors. I don't know about you, but when I come across a new acquaintance who makes it known that they are a believer, I am excited; my faith is bolstered because I have met a new brother or sister in Christ. So, declaring my faith publicly has a double blessing, I bless the people before whom I share Christ, and I have the promise that Jesus will own me as His faithful servant before God and His angels. But, if I deny Christ, He will deny me before His Father, and the angels of God—⁹ *but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God.*

This confession of faith in Jesus must originate in the heart. Our Lord teaches us that there will be many who make a verbal profession of faith, they may even claim to do mighty works in His name, but their faith is not genuine. Jesus gives this caveat:

Matthew 7:21-23—*“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.*

²² *On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’*

²³ *And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of*

lawlessness.’ **What is the problem here?** These people are clearly professing faith in Jesus before men; what gives? The Lord Jesus knows the hearts of men and women and there will be many who claim faith, but it is not a confession from the heart. The Apostle Paul speaks of this connection between the heart and mouth:

Romans 10:6-10—*But the righteousness based on faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷ “or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹ because, 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.*

¹⁰ *For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.*

So, along with asking if you have professed faith in Jesus before others, you must consider if your confession of faith is from the heart; do you honestly believe in Jesus from your heart, the core of your being? If you can answer yes, then rejoice in anticipation of the day Jesus will claim you as His own before our Heavenly Father and His angels. If not, or you’re not sure, then pray for the Lord to give the gift of faith. Speak to your pastor or elder, someone who is eager to hear you proclaim your faith in Jesus. Now, let us consider:

THE BLASPHEMY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

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.* Jesus makes a distinction between speaking against the Son of Man and speaking against, or blasphemies against the Holy Spirit—one of these is forgiven, the other is not.

The Son of Man—In case you have forgotten, this person identified by Jesus as the Son of man is Himself; Jesus is the Son of Man and it is a reference to a vision of Daniel’s. **Daniel 7:13-14** —*“I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. ¹⁴ And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.* That which Daniel has revealed to Him is a vision of the Christ of God, Jesus, going before His Father, the Ancient of Days, to receive His inheritance, the people He purchased with his blood.

Again, the Pharisees are in view with this warning. I have mentioned how they viewed the miraculous works that Jesus did. Initially, they saw them as magician's tricks, illusions intended to deceive. When they were proven to be genuine works of healing and wonders, they then declared these were being done by the power of Satan. And here is the crux of the issue. These miraculous works, intended as proof that Jesus is, indeed, the promised Christ. These works were done by the power of the Holy Spirit. To assign the power behind these works as that of the Devil's and not the Spirit of God, is to blaspheme the Holy Spirit.

Now, the question will arise, "Why is it that a person who speaks against God the Father, or against Jesus, God the Son will be forgiven, but speaking against the Spirit will not be forgiven?" Good question. We declare that all three persons share all the attributes of that which is divine. It has to do with the economic relations of the persons of Trinity. The Father has chosen a people to give to the Son. The Son does the work necessary to save those chosen by God. It is the Spirit's work to convict of sin and reveal the truth of Jesus. The Holy Spirit causes a person to be born again and gives the gift of faith in Jesus by which they are saved.

A person may initially reject the claim of Jesus, but later be moved by the Holy Spirit to place their faith in Him. This was the case with the Apostle Paul. Paul in Philippians describes the social standing he had before coming to faith in Christ; he states that he was: **Philippians 3:5-11**--*circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.* Did you catch that, a persecutor of church? No doubt, at one time Paul felt about Jesus in the same way the Pharisees who confronted Jesus did. Likely, Paul spoke ill of Jesus, but when he was confronted by Christ, Himself, there was a genuine change of heart, and this is produced by the Spirit. Notice Paul's confession of faith before men: ⁷ *But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.* ⁸ *Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*

Paul considered his social standing and esteem as a Pharisee as rubbish in order to be found in Christ.

The writer to the Hebrews gives us an interesting thought in speaking of those who have tasted the benefits of the Holy Spirit, but who ultimately reject Christ.

Hebrews 6:4-6—*For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ 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.*

No doubt this passage qualifies as a very difficult passage that must be interpreted in light of more clear passages which speak to the issue of salvation wrought by the Spirit's power. We believe that we are able to have true faith by the power of God's Holy Spirit making us alive to the things of God. Jesus declared, unless a person is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. ***We believe the grace of God is irresistible—God will save His elect, His chosen ones.*** **John 6:44**—*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.* And if one is denying the power of the Spirit to save, it reveals that there has not been a saving work of the Spirit. The Hebrews 6 passage describes a person who has had some experience with people of faith and the Church. I believe it speaks of children born into a Covenant community who see the blessings of the community of faith. They have been enlightened in a Sunday school class. They have tasted of the goodness of God's Spirit at work, but that is it, they've only tasted, not fully trusted from the heart. For reasons known only to God, the Spirit has not brought them from death to life.

So, blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is to speak against the Spirit and the Spirit's work in a person's heart. Listen to how R. C. Sproul frames this matter: *"But what happens if the Holy Spirit reveals to you that Jesus is the Christ? What if He makes it manifest to you and shows you the truth—not just a preacher telling it to you, not just a theologian explaining it for you, but God the Holy Spirit illumining your mind and your heart and revealing to you indubitably that Jesus is the Son of God? What if you then call Christ a devil? You have just committed the unpardonable sin."*

Sproul, R.C.. Luke: An Expository Commentary (p. 356). Reformation Trust Publishing. Kindle Edition.

Don't resist the Holy Spirit's work in your heart.

WORDS GIVEN BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

¹¹ 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, ¹² for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

It should be noted that Jesus is speaking immediately to His Disciples. To them He promised the Holy Spirit's power to inspire in them, to literally breathe into them the very Word of God. The prophets and apostles were agents of God's self-revelation; that is not a task given to us. However, I do believe that in those times of persecution, or times in which a clear word of God is needed, the Spirit will bring to mind words to say that will speak clearly of our faith in Jesus. For us, the words will not be new revelation, but words from Scripture, or faithfully reflect the teaching of Scripture.

This is one reason we recite confessions of faith so that we will know how to acknowledge Christ before others, so that we are enabled to faithfully profess our faith before men.

An Example: When the leaders of the Jews put Jesus to death, they may have thought that was the end of the matter. How wrong they were. By the power of the Spirit that came upon them at Pentecost, the Apostles boldly proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus. At one point the rulers prohibited them from speaking the name of Jesus. Their response is found in **Acts 4:18-20**-- *So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, ²⁰ for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."*

May the Lord give us such boldness that we will acknowledge Jesus before men. That boldness will come from the heart that has been born again by God's Holy Spirit. If we are so bold, Christ will acknowledge us before His Father in Heaven.

Matthew 12:36-37—*I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, ³⁷ for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."*