

THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW

The King's Kingdom: A Study of Matthew 8–13

STUDY FIFTEEN

Severe Warnings Everyone Must Remember

Matthew 12:30–37

The Pharisees had called a meeting to plot how to kill Jesus. Later, they would play a major role in Jesus' arrest, torture, and crucifixion. They were snakes in religious robes, and they were ready to strike.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

HAVE you ever had enemies? Perhaps certain people considered you a threat, and they determined to bring you down. If malicious people have ever targeted you for attack, you know how terrifying it can be.

Rarely do enemies call attention to themselves or forewarn their assaults. They are snakelike in their tactics—subtle, cold-hearted, and cunning. Jesus called His enemies—the Pharisees who were conspiring to kill him—a “brood of vipers” (Matthew 12:34 NASB). He considered them offspring of the serpent, the devil, who attacked our first parents in the garden of Eden.

However, the Pharisees couldn't intimidate Jesus. Never had they met someone like Him who did not cower in fear when they cast their judgments. In response, Jesus took the role of an Old Testament prophet issuing severe warnings to Israel's leaders who were preventing people from accepting their King. He spoke the truth with a clear voice in the power of the Spirit—which is always the best way to confront an enemy.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Jesus' warnings to His enemies reverberate in our ears too. They remind us of the serious nature of the King's battle against evil and that neutrality in the global campaign is not an option. In prayer, ask the Lord to help you understand the meaning of this *Searching the Scriptures* study's difficult passage and give you insight for standing strong in the truth.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

Severe Warnings Everyone Must Remember

Matthew 12:30–37



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In his commentary, *Insights on Matthew 1–15*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll helps us view Jesus' warnings in the broader context of His ministry.

At this point in Jesus' ministry, the sides were forming, the crowds were dividing, and the true character of His detractors was coming to light. Those who were being driven further and further away from faith in Christ began to act out in a shocking way. They attributed the works of the Spirit of God to the power of Satan. . . . They were essentially calling the eternal, divine Son of God a tool of the devil!¹

Read *Matthew 12:30–37* with this backdrop in mind and notice the line Jesus drew between Himself on one side and His enemies on the other, between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan.



Observation: Three Warnings

Observation is the first step in *Searching the Scriptures*. We simply look for what's in the verses without attempting to decipher the meaning.² Observe Jesus' black-and-white language as He pictures those who are for Him or against Him. No diplomatic "greys" in Jesus' speech. Write down the vivid verbs, nouns, and adjectives that stand out to you.



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The Impossibility of Neutrality—Matthew 12:30

Previously, we witnessed the clash of two kingdoms when Jesus banished the evil spirit. The spirit that demonized the man represented Satan's kingdom, and the Spirit of God by whose power Jesus cast out the demon represented God's kingdom. In *Matthew 12:30*, how did Jesus clarify the impossibility of taking a neutral position in our allegiance to one side or the other?

Jesus drew a line in the sand. His enemies were on one side. His friends and followers were on the other. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The Severity of Blasphemy—Matthew 12:31–32

Building on His for-Me-or-against-Me principle, Jesus went on to expose the Pharisees' slithering sin that spawned all their evildoing: *blasphemy against the Holy Spirit*. In *Matthew 12:31–32*, Jesus explained what is commonly known as the “unpardonable sin.” We will explore the meaning of this sin in the interpretation section. For now, describe the contrast Jesus made between “every sin and blasphemy” and “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.” Look for words of contrast.

Those who understood what Jesus did but deliberately, persistently, and blatantly rejected it as satanic . . . found themselves in an unpardonable situation. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Matthew 12:30–37

The Anatomy of Depravity—Matthew 12:33–37

The Jews in Jesus' day revered the Pharisees as guardians of spiritual truth and morality. How then could these religious leaders be guilty of the worst kind of sin? They looked holy, like a tree laden with fruit might look healthy. As Jesus said, the only way to know the true condition of the tree is to taste the fruit, *and these Pharisees were rotten!*

Using this analogy of a tree and its fruit in [Matthew 12:33](#), what did Jesus imply about the Pharisees' spiritual condition? By implication, what would have to change for them to produce the sweet fruit of true righteousness?

How did Jesus apply His tree-and-fruit analogy to others in [Matthew 12:34–37](#)?

The reservoir within us that holds the truths we accept or deny is our heart. Our tongue dips into our heart like a bucket into a well, lifts what's in the heart, and spills it out in our words. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

To summarize: Jesus warned about, first, the impossibility of neutrality—choose sides in the battle of the kingdoms. Second, the severity of blaspheming the Holy Spirit—avoid the Pharisees' road to destruction. Third, the anatomy of depravity—repent to change one's heart and good fruit will follow. With these points in our pocket, let's dig into the meaning of the unpardonable sin.



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Interpretation: The Unpardonable Sin

Jesus began His teaching on the unpardonable sin with a note of mercy: “every sin and blasphemy can be forgiven,” and even someone who “speaks against the Son of Man can be forgiven” (Matthew 12:31–32). What a relief for repentant skeptics and scoffers who wonder if Christ will receive them. *He will!*

The most famous blasphemer who found forgiveness was Paul whom Jesus called to be an apostle even though he “blasphemed the name of Christ” (1 Timothy 1:13). Paul explained the reason God forgave him:

In my insolence, I persecuted his people. But God had mercy on me because I did it in ignorance and unbelief. Oh, how generous and gracious our Lord was! He filled me with the faith and love that come from Christ Jesus. (1:13–14, emphasis added)

Unlike Paul, the Pharisees witnessed *irrefutable proof* of Christ's identity and the Spirit's *undeniable power* through the miracles Jesus performed. Read page 250 of Pastor Chuck's commentary and write down the difference between the “pardonable” nature of Paul's blasphemy versus the “unpardonable” nature of the Pharisees' blasphemy.

Pastor Chuck sums up the peculiar characteristic of the Pharisees' sin against the Holy Spirit:

So the prospect of this unpardonable sin, from which there was no opportunity for repentance, was unique to the eyewitnesses of Jesus' miracles and message—those who rejected it knowingly, willingly, and persistently. In that narrow sense, such blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is no longer possible because Jesus' earthly ministry is over.³



Severe Warnings Everyone Must Remember

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What would you say to a believer who fears he or she may have committed the unpardonable sin? For help with the answer, read page 252 of Pastor Chuck's commentary. For an online resource, consult *Constable's Notes* at netbible.org.

The Pharisees rejected Jesus as their Messiah and refused Him as their Lord. But they went beyond disbelief. When the light of heaven shone around them, they called it darkness, and when the goodness of the Holy Spirit freed a soul in bondage, they called it evil. How tragic that those who dressed in such fine robes of religion could have hearts of stone.



Correlation: Disqualification Today

While blasphemy against the Holy Spirit might not occur in our day, there is a sin that correlates with it. Jesus mentioned this sin in John's gospel, and then the aged apostle commented upon it in his short letter, 1 John. What sin results in God's judgment according to [John 3:16–18](#) and [1 John 5:10–12](#)?



Application: The Necessity of Reality

While it may have been too late for Jesus' enemies to heed His warnings, it wasn't too late for those in the crowd who saw His miracles and heard His teaching. It's not too late for us either. Ponder these points as you begin to apply our study.



Severe Warnings Everyone Must Remember

Matthew 12:30–37

First, *it's easy to take a neutral position and hide in the shadows of religious ambiguity when enemies attack our Lord.* Has the pressure of unbelievers who are hostile toward Christian values weakened your resolve to speak for what you believe? If you've been blending in rather than speaking up, what step can you take to show you are with Christ and His kingdom cause?

Second, *replay the mental recording of your words lately.* Have they reflected the condition of your heart? Most likely, they have. If your words flow from a heart of fear, bring that fear to the Lord. If from anger or bitterness or a grudge toward someone, bring that to the Lord. Ask Him in the following space to cleanse your heart and purify your words.

When Jesus confronted His enemies, all who heard Him benefited from His warnings. Let's take them to heart as well, invite Him to transform us from the inside out, and confess Him as our Lord whenever we have the chance.



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Matthew 12:30–37



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, the secret to bearing good fruit is a changed life. Reach into the treasury of my heart and deposit Your riches of love and hope, faith and peace, joy and trust. Transform my spiritual DNA so that I naturally and eagerly do what's right and speak what's good. In every way, make me like Christ and fill me with Your Spirit, in Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on Matthew 1–15*, vol. 1A (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2020), 249.
2. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."
3. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on Matthew 1–15*, 252.



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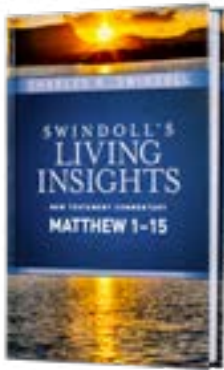
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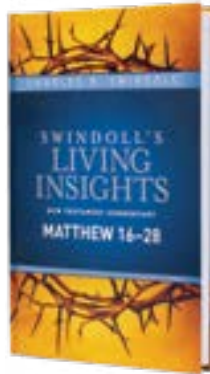
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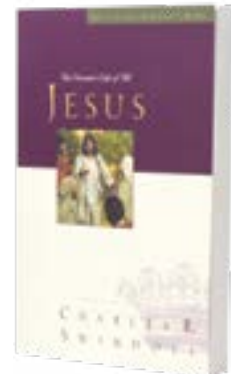
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2021 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Studies, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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