

I. Read Luke 12:8-12

- A. In verse 8, Jesus makes an important promise to all those who trust Him. What is it?

- B. Read Revelation 20:11-15, and discuss how Luke 12:8-9 might relate to it.

- C. Read Romans 10:9-10 and discuss the role of one's confession of Christ in salvation.

- D. Another application of Luke 12:8-9 involves our willingness to *take God's side* against a culture or individuals who are in opposition to God and the things of God. This is truly where the rubber meets the road in the Christian walk. It may be relatively easy to confess Christ and/or join a church in a society that is still nominally Christian, but it is a different matter to take unpopular stands on specific issues. What are some examples of this?

Why do many fail to grasp the importance of approaching one's faith in a very practical manner?

- E. In Luke 12:10, Jesus is warning against a serious sin. It is important to remember the context of His warning. He is rebuking the Pharisees, scribes and lawyers for their hypocrisy while, at the same time, encouraging His followers to stand with Him. The sin He warns against is *blasphemy against the Holy Spirit*. Read the following note before going on.

NOTE: The Unpardonable Sin – Jesus' solemn warning about a kind of sin that will not be forgiven, either in this world or the next, is found in three Gospels: Matthew 12:31-32; Mark 3:28-30; Luke 12:10. It is specifically "blasphemy against the Spirit." This blasphemy is an act performed by speaking, understood as an expression of the thoughts of the heart (Matthew 12:33-37; cf. Romans 10:9-10). In this particular context, the opponents of Jesus were saying that the Power doing good works among them was not God but the devil. Jesus distinguishes between this blasphemy and other sins, both other sins of speech and other sins in general. As the Bible teaches, God forgave sins of incest, murder, lying, and even Paul's persecution of the church, which Paul did while "breathing threats and murder" against God's people. (Acts 9:1)

What makes the unpardonable sin different from others is its relation to the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit's work to enlighten the mind of sinners (Ephesians 1:17-18), to reveal and teach the gospel (John 14:26), persuading souls to repent and believe the truth (cf. Acts 7:51). The Spirit not only explains the Word of God, but He opens the mind so that it is perceived (2 Corinth. 3:16-17). When His influence is deliberately and knowingly refused, in opposition to the light, then the unforgivable sin can be committed as a voluntary, informed act of malice. In response, there is a hardening of the heart from God that rules out repentance and faith (Hebrews 3:12-13). God permits the decision of the human will to be permanent in this case. God does not do this lightly or without cause, but in response to an offense against His love.

A person who wants to repent, that is, to reverse the sins he may be guilty of, has not suffered this hardening and has not committed the profound act of hatred that God has determined He will not forgive. Anyone who has been born again will not commit this sin, because the Spirit lives in that person, and God is not divided against Himself (See 1 John 3:9). (This note is excerpted from the New Geneva Study Bible.)

Can a Christian commit the unpardonable sin?

- F. In Luke 12:11, Jesus encourages His followers with the assurance that He will equip them, as they are in need, with the ability to speak boldly. This is a truth that Christians can count on in all areas of life. Read Philippians 4:13, 2 Corinth. 12:9-10; John 14:15-18, 16:5-15 and discuss the *means* of equipping according to God's provision.

- G. Corrie Ten Boom's father explained to her as a small child that he did not give her a train ticket until it is time to take a trip and board a train. His explanation was in response to her anxiety about what trouble the future might bring. What was he really saying to her?

- H. Share an instance when you have experienced God's grace and/or strength, beyond your personal ability.

- I. What do you fear the most?

How should Luke 12:11 give you comfort as you consider this fear?