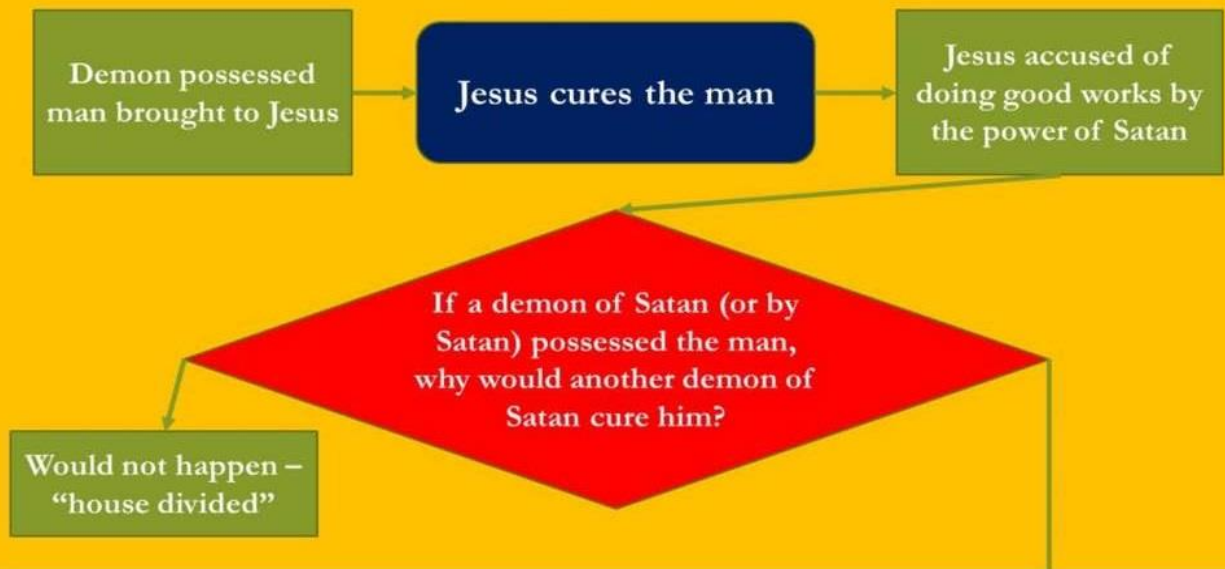


Is There A Sin That Can't Be Forgiven?

By David Lee Burris



Original Meaning of Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit Using the Scripture – Matthew 12:22-32



³¹ And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.³² 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.

Matthew 12:31-32

The First Epistle of
JOHN

a Tapestry message series

¹⁶ If you see any brother or sister commit a sin that does not lead to death, you should pray and God will give them life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that you should pray about that. ¹⁷ All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to

I John 5:16-21

The First Epistle of
JOHN

a Tapestry message series





QUESTION:

WHAT IS THE UNFORGIVABLE SIN ?

Peter blasphemed Christ with cursing and swearing on his third time denying Christ but he was also forgiven

(MARK 14:71)

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Blasphemy — What Is this Great Sin?

By [Wayne Jackson](#)

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For many people, one of the most fearful terms to be found in the New Testament is the word “blasphemy.”

Blasphemy is represented as a horrible sin, but what is it? Have I been guilty of it? Can one obtain pardon for it? These are serious questions that engage the attention of the devout person.

Blasphemy is an anglicized form of the Greek term **blasphemia**, which scholars believe probably derives from two roots—**blapto**, to injure, and **pheme**, to speak. The word would thus suggest injurious speech.

Contextually, though, the noun **blasphemia**, and its kindred terms—the verb **blasphemeo** and the adjective **blasphemos**—can refer to a variety of attitudes and actions. Let us consider several passages:

Blaspheming God

That one can blaspheme God is apparent from several New Testament passages.

For example, in the book of Romans Paul rebuked those wicked Jews who had been given a written revelation from God and who taught against certain vile practices, yet who nonetheless were guilty of the very sins they condemned. The apostle thus says,

“For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, because of you, even as it is written” (Rom. 2:24).

When the people of the world observe those who profess to be saints living immorally, they frequently speak injuriously against the Lord himself: “Some God he must be if his children live like that!”

Can we learn anything from this?

Similarly, Paul admonished Christian servants to honor their masters in order that “the name of God and the doctrine be not blasphemed” (1 Tim. 6:1).

So sacred is the authority of God and his doctrine, those early saints were obliged to be good slaves that such truths be not injured. The sweet influences of the Christian religion would, of course, in time cause the vile business of slavery to lose much of its grip on humanity.

But how can men otherwise blaspheme God?

Certainly those who deny his very existence blaspheme him!

“The fool hath said in his heart, “There is no God”” (Psa. 14:1).

Scripture speaks of those deluded souls who, in their senselessness, refuse to have God in their knowledge (Rom. 1:18ff).

To observe the great creation of which we are a part (Psa. 19:1), and then to attribute that to chance, fate, accident, or evolution is a vile form of blasphemy against its author!

Blaspheming Christ

As Christ was hanging on the cross, certain folks passed by his quivering body and “reviled him” (KJV), or “railed on him” (ASV), according to the record of Matthew 27:39. The Greek literally suggests they blasphemed (**blasphemeo**) him.

Here is what they said:

“Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days [cf. Jn. 2:19ff], save yourself: if you are the Son of God, come down from the cross” (Mt. 27:40).

The apostle thus informs us that these who repudiated the **divine sonship** of Jesus were guilty of blasphemy.

If such was the rage of those ancient rebels, what shall be said of today’s rabid, slobbering modernists who deny that the humble Nazarene was born to the virgin Mary, as both Matthew and Luke affirm.

What about those who rationalize the Savior’s astounding miracles by saying they were but natural phenomena misinterpreted by a superstitious age, and those who insist that the Lord’s body still lies in some unmarked Judean grave?

Men who promote such ideas are blasphemers of the rankest variety, and yet, sadly, they occupy hundreds of pulpits in this nation of ours.

Blaspheming the Holy Spirit

Christ declared,

“Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven” (Mt. 12:31).

Within this context the Lord indicated that those who spoke against him could find pardon, but those who spoke against the Spirit could not (Mt. 12:32).

Since both Christ and the Spirit are deity (Jn. 1:1; Acts 5:3, 4), why should it, within this setting, appear to be **more serious** to dishonor the Spirit than the Savior?

We believe the emphasis here has to be on the chronological aspects of their respective functions.

Though the Jews would presently crucify their Messiah, nevertheless, with the great outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and the proclamation of his message of grace, thousands of them would receive pardon (Acts 2).

If, though, that kingdom of redemption, whose introduction was divinely verified by the workings of the Spirit (cf. Mt. 12:28), was repudiated, what else was there through which men could be saved? Absolutely nothing!

To harden oneself **against the gospel plan** is, therefore, blasphemy against the Spirit of God, and those who continue in such a disposition have no means of obtaining forgiveness.

But there are other ways of blaspheming the Spirit.

Would it not be a blasphemy of the Holy Spirit to deny his very personality? Indeed! Yet this is precisely what several religious cults do.

For instance, the Watchtower organization claims that the Spirit is but the impersonal “active force” of Jehovah. The Armstrong cult and Christian Science have similar bizarre notions.

Blaspheming the Word

We mentioned earlier Paul’s reference to blaspheming the doctrine of God (1 Tim. 6:1).

In a similar admonition the apostle exhorts Titus to “speak the things which befit the sound doctrine” (Tit. 2:1). He then proceeds to give instructions concerning the conduct that is expected of the maturer saints, both men and women.

He says, for example, among other things, that aged women are to be:

“sober-minded, chaste, workers at home, kind, being in subjection to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed” (Tit. 2:5).

Here, a lack of Christian fidelity can cause the divine word to be blasphemed.

Let every child of God take care! We must always remember that we are the only “Bible” that many people will read, and if they see in us shallowness, apathy, and hypocrisy, they may attribute those unholy traits to the word which we profess to believe.

Others, who arrogantly contend that the Bible is merely a collection of human works, blaspheme that holy document which is “inspired of God” (1 Tim. 3:16).

And those who allege their confidence in the Bible’s divine origin, yet who confess they believe that it is nevertheless flawed with “jars, clashes, and contradictions” also revile the infallible word.

Moreover, any person who perverts the sacred teaching of the Scriptures to accommodate his worldly lifestyle or his theological prejudices, is assaulting the holy volume!

Blaspheming the Church

In the book of Revelation, chapter thirteen, John saw a beast rising from the sea. Obviously representing an enemy of God, the beast had seven heads, upon which were “names of blasphemy” (Rev. 13:1). The apostle declares,

“And he opened his mouth for blasphemies against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, even them that dwell in the heaven” (Rev. 13:6).

The Old Testament tabernacle, which was a prototype of the temple, prefigured the church (Heb. 9:8-9; 1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:21), composed of those who have been raised up with Christ to sit in the heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6).

It is possible, therefore, according to Revelation 13:6, to blaspheme the church of God. How do men accomplish that abominable act?

It may be done in any number of ways. Though the Bible clearly teaches that Christ is the savior of the body, which is the church (Eph. 5:23; 1:22, 23), numerous religious leaders boldly announce that that blood-bought organism is but an option, that a lost person does not necessarily need to enter the church in order to enjoy the blessings of redemption.

Others blaspheme the tabernacle of God by suggesting that most any church will do. Just turn to the Yellow Pages and select yourself a good church!

One would do better to turn to the New Testament and select Christ's church, for all churches not planted by him will ultimately be rooted up (Mt. 15:13).

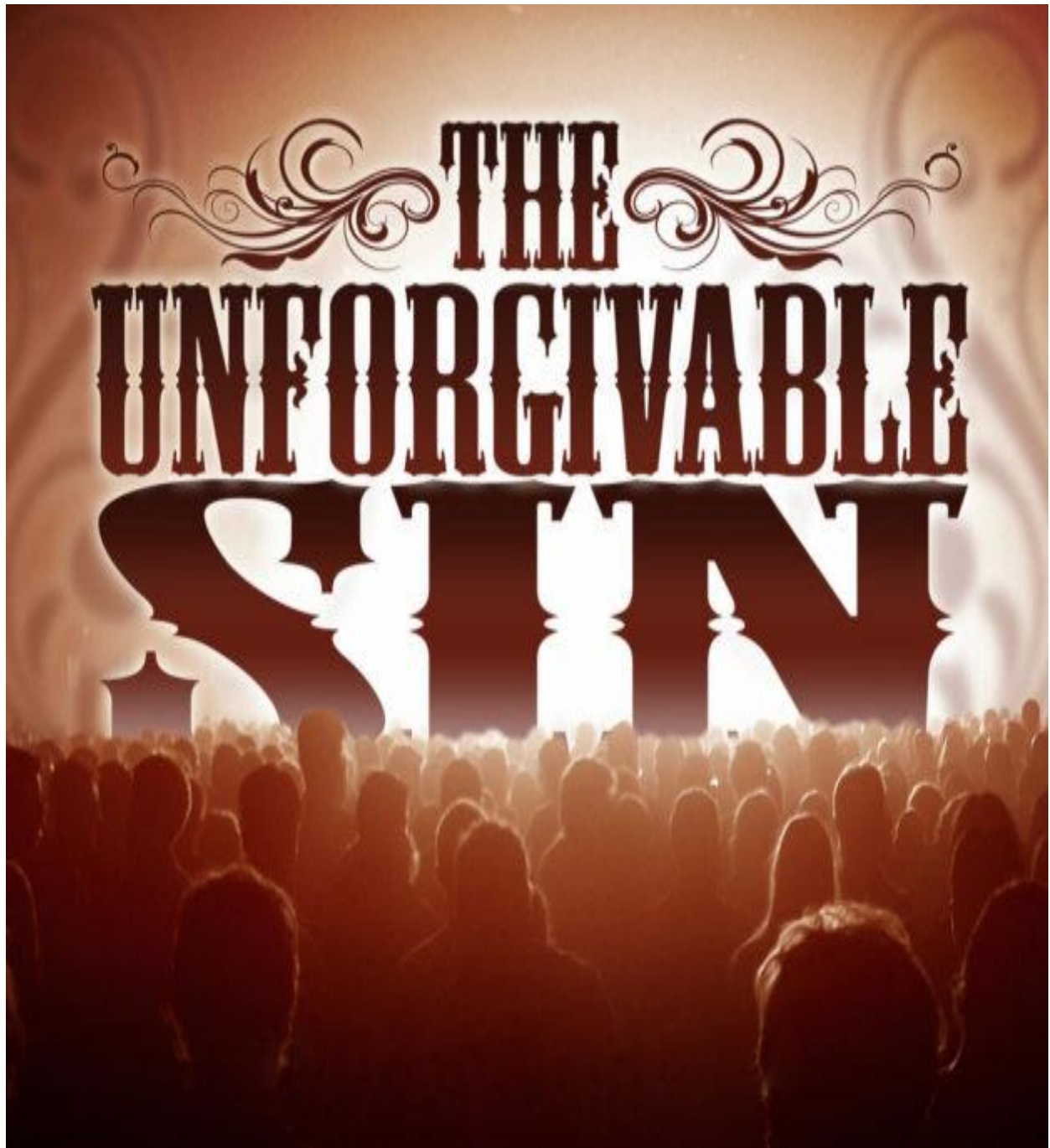
Can Blasphemy Be Forgiven?

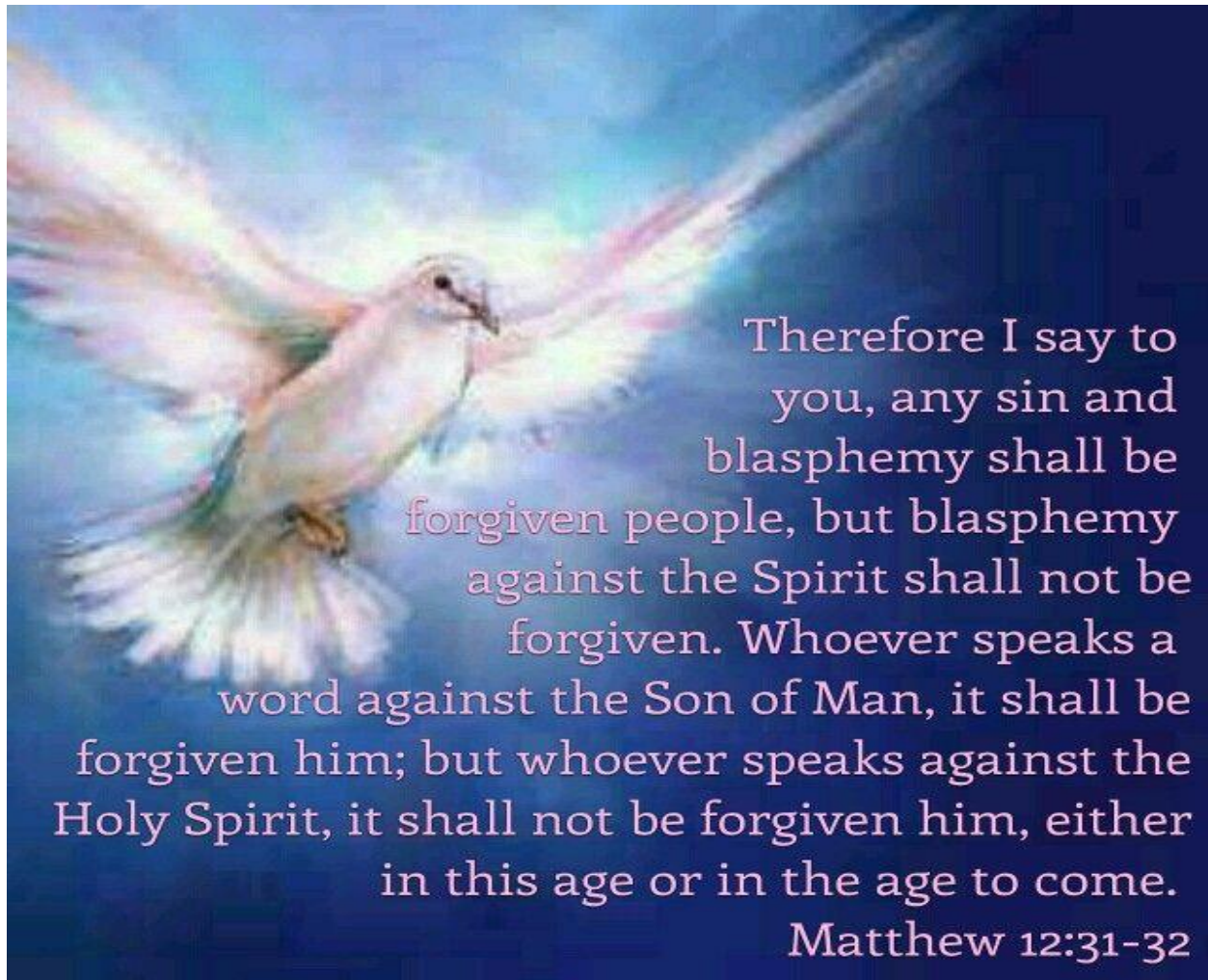
Any sin for which one seeks forgiveness through God's prescribed plan can be forgiven. This can be demonstrated by the case of no less a person than Paul.

Prior to the time of his conversion to Jesus Christ, Saul of Tarsus was "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious," howbeit, he "obtained mercy" (1 Tim. 1:13). When he, in penitent faith, submitted to the Lord's command to "be baptized," his sins (including blasphemy) were washed away (Acts 22:16).

Furthermore, the same gracious promise of comprehensive pardon is available to every child of God—even those who have acted injuriously with reference to Jehovah and his cause—who will repent of his wrong, acknowledge it, and ask the Lord's forgiveness.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1:9).





The “Unpardonable” Sin?

- Jesus made it clear that God can and will forgive all sins. v. 28
- The only “unpardonable sin” is refusal to trust in Jesus Christ. John 3:16–18, 36
 - When Jesus warned the Jewish leaders, He was actually warning the Jewish nation. They could reject the Son of God while He was on earth, and God would not judge them immediately: “Father, forgive them” Luke 23:34
 - But when the Spirit came at Pentecost and the believers did many marvelous works, the leaders still refused to believe. This was their last opportunity: they rejected the evidence and died in unbelief. They sinned against the witness of the Spirit and could not be forgiven.

Jesus, Complete Obedience Puts Mercy Over Sacrifice:

- Since Christ was greater than the Temple, if in His service it was necessary for the disciples on occasion to pluck and eat grain, this was justified as surely as was the work of the priests on the Sabbath day. **Does 12:6 include, by implication the “how much more so” type of argument? In what ways is Christ greater than the Temple?**
- **Did it mean that when the demands of sacrifices and the demands of mercy conflicted, they were to follow mercy? Had the Pharisees neglected mercy? (Matt. 23:23).**
- **Do people criticize a physician for spending time with the sick? Does the fact that he associates so much with sick people prove that there is something wrong with him? Would there be something wrong, if he refused to help the sick? Did the Pharisees agree that these people were sick in sin? Were they condemned by the very principle of Matt. 9:12, which they were forced to acknowledge as being a valid principle? What other answer did Jesus make? (9:13). Is there tendency to write off whole groups as being so sick that a physician will not do any good?**
- When we go to passages which speak of God’s willingness to forgive, we find that God is willing and that the failure is with man. (Exodus 33:7-20; Matthew 23:36-37). Observe on Matt. 23:36-37 that this statement would include any who had blasphemed the Holy Spirit, for some in Jerusalem did. (2nd Peter 3:9). **Since no passage says that the sin against the Spirit will not be forgiven because God is not willing to forgive, should we really say it? Is not the fault entirely with man?**

- The individual who has become so hardened that he can attribute such a clear work of God, a supernatural work which he admits to be supernatural, to the devil, has gone so far into darkness that he will never see the light. He has become so hardened that truth cannot penetrate.
- If the label is an accurate description of the contents, it is not wrong to apply the label. Of course, we should first show what is in the container and thus justify our use of the label. However, individuals may mislabel others in an effort to discredit them. – *Bales "Woe Unto You"*

WOE UNTO YOU?
PHARISEES
GUILTY
MOSES' SEAT
HYPOCRITES
PHYLACTERIES
WHITENASHED TOMBS
Written by RABBI
James D. Bales

Pulpit Commentary

Verses 31, 32. - Parallel passages: [Mark 3:28-30](#) (where the verses immediately follow our ver. 29) and [Luke 12:10](#) (where the context is not the same, he having passed straight from our ver. 30 to our ver. 43, **vide infra**). It is to be observed that all three accounts differ a good deal in form, though but slightly in substance. The Apostolical Constitutions contain what is probably a mixture of these verses with [2 Peter 2:1](#) and other passages of the New Testament. Resch ('Agrapha,' pp. 130, 249, etc.), in accordance with his theory, thinks that the Constitutions have preserved a genuine utterance of the Lord, of which only different fragments are presented in various parts of the New Testament. A few words of introduction to these difficult verses. It has been strangely forgotten, in their interpretation, that our Lord spoke in language that he intended his hearers to understand, and that probably not a single one of those who stood by would understand by the expressions, „ the Spirit" (ver. 31), "the Holy Spirit" (ver. 32), a Person in the Godhead distinct from the First Person or the Second (cf. [Matthew 1:18](#), note). At most they would understand them to refer to an influence by God upon men ([Psalm 51:11](#); cf. [Luke 11:13](#)), such as Christ had claimed to possess in a special degree ([Luke 4:18](#)). In inquiring, therefore, for an explanation of our Lord's sayings, we must not begin at the Trinitarian standpoint, and see in the words a contrast between "blasphemy" against one Person of the Trinity, and "**blasphemy**" against another. The contrast is between "blasphemy" against Christ as Son of man, Christ in his earthly work and under earthly conditions, the Christ whom they saw and whom they did not understand, and "blasphemy" against God as such working upon earth. "**Blasphemy**" against the former might be due to ignorance and prejudice, but "blasphemy" against the latter was to speak against God's work recognized as such, against God manifesting himself to their consciences (cf. vers. 27, 28); it was to reject the counsel of God towards them, to set themselves up in opposition to God, and thus to exclude from themselves forgiveness. Just as under the Law there were sacrifices for sins of ignorance and minor offences, but none for willful disregard of and opposition to God, so must it be at all times even under the gospel itself. Observe that the "blasphemy" is understood by our Lord as showing the state of the heart (cf. [Acts 7:51](#)). **What the effect of a change of heart, i.e. of repentance, would be does not enter into our Lord's utterance. All other sin is venial, but for heart-opposition there is no forgiveness.** As Tyndale says ('Expositions,' p. 232, Parker Society), "Sin against the Holy Ghost is despising of the gospel and his working. Where that bideth is no remedy of sin: for it fighteth against faith, which is the forgiveness of sin. If that be put away, faith may enter in, and all sins depart." (Cf. also Dörner, 'System,' 3:73; 4:91.) Verse 31. - **Wherefore** (διὰ τοῦτο). Referring primarily to ver. 30, and to be joined closely to "I say unto you." Because such is the terrible effect of what you think mere indifferentism, I say this solemnly, Beware of committing the great sin. Luke's connexion of our ver. 43 with ver. 30 gives a good but a weaker sense - Become fully decided, lest the devil return to you stronger than ever. Matthew's connexion is - Become fully decided, for the legitimate outcome of want of decision is the sin that will not be forgiven. **I say unto you** ([Matthew 6:25](#), note), **All manner of; every** (Revised Version); πᾶσα. **Sin and blasphemy**. Genus and species (Meyer). **Blasphemy** passes in this verse from its wider meaning of open slander and detraction in the first clause to its now commoner but restricted meaning of speech against God in the second clause. **Shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost; the Spirit** (Revised Version), thus making it more possible for the English reader to see the connexion of thought with the phrase in ver. 28. **Shall not be forgiven unto men**. The words, **unto men**, must be omitted, with the Revised Version. They weaken a statement which in itself may apply to other beings than those that are on earth. Matthew 12:31

Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit

Dan Petty

"Therefore, I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven" (Matt. 12:31). What is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? Why is this an unpardonable sin?

Context

The context of this passage (Matt. 12:22-37) is essential to understanding Jesus' statement. Jesus had demonstrated his divinity by healing the demon-possessed (vv. 22-23). The multitudes marveled at his power, but the Pharisees (scribes who came from Jerusalem to Galilee, Mark 3:22), unable to deny that miracles had been performed, attributed them to the power of Beelzebub, "the ruler of the demons" (v. 24).

Jesus responded that the accusation of the Pharisees that represented Satan as divided against himself was absurd (vv. 25-26). Why would the evil one rob himself of his greatest achievement, his triumph over the souls of men? By so arguing, the Pharisees had also entangled themselves in gross inconsistency, since they claimed that some of their own could cast out demons (v. 27).

Their argument was actually a deliberate attempt to deny the truth. Jesus was able to cast out demons, not by the powers of evil, but by the "Spirit of God" ("finger of God," Luke 11:20). By God's power Jesus had entered a "strong man's" (Satan's) house and plundered him of his goods; far from being in league with Satan, Jesus had overpowered him (v. 29). The mighty works of Christ indicated the coming of the kingdom of God (v. 28). He had given clear and irrefutable evidence of the truth of his message; in the light of such evidence neutrality is impossible (v. 30). Yet the scribes willfully and deliberately assigned to Satanic origins what the Holy Spirit was actually doing, in spite of evidence to the contrary.

In Mark 3:22-30 Jesus' saying about blasphemy against the Spirit appears in the same context as in Matthew. **The statement is also found in Luke, but the context is different.** The Pharisees' charge that Jesus cast out demons by Beelzebub is recorded in Luke 11:14-26, but Jesus' words about blaspheming the Spirit do not appear until 12:10. Here they come immediately between his warning that "he who denies Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God" (vv. 8-9), and his assurances to his disciples that the Spirit would be their helper when they stood before earthly powers, that they might know what to speak (vv. 11-12). In reviling the power through which Jesus worked, the scribes were blaspheming the very Spirit who was promised to be their Comforter in difficult times.

What is Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit?

The word blasphemy (blasphemia), "impious and reproachful speech injurious to the divine majesty" (Thayer), **in this context denotes an attitude of "defiant irreverence."** The scribes who accused Jesus were guilty of blaspheming the Holy Spirit because they defied the truth. They treated his miracles with worse than indifference; they blasphemously attributed them to Satan. They were like those condemned by Isaiah the prophet (5:20): "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" **Philo thus commented that those who blaspheme against the divine and ascribe the origin of evil to God and not man can expect no forgiveness.** By accusing Jesus of being in league with Satan when he was really acting through the power of the Holy Spirit, they had blasphemed the Spirit, hardening their hearts against the Spirit's influence.

Why is This an Unpardonable Sin?

Jesus said that every other sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven. "And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him . . ." (Matt. 12:32). Christ referred to himself as the "Son of Man" to emphasize his humanity. To speak evil words against Jesus as a man working among men, though deplorable, was an evil that could be forgiven. The Son of Man in his earthly ministry was as liable to misunderstanding and ill treatment by others as any new messenger. When the source of evil speaking against Christ is ignorance, misconception, or ill-informed prejudice, then that blasphemy is as pardonable as any sin. Men could repent of their careless neglect of his work or their mistaken opposition to it, and when they did repent, they were forgiven. There are many examples in the New Testament of people who first opposed Jesus but later turned to accept him. Peter, perhaps through fear, denied Jesus in his hour of trial (Mark 14:71-72), but he found forgiveness, and when he was restored he was able to strengthen others (Luke 22:31-32). Paul marveled at the mercy extended to him even though he had been "a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor" (1 Tim. 1:12-16, emphasis mine, dwp). The apostle described himself as the "chief of sinners" to show, in fact, the perfect patience of Christ as the Savior of all.

The person who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, however, places himself beyond the reach of forgiveness. This is true because the Holy Spirit is the agent in the revelation of divine truth (2 Sam. 23:2; John 15:26; 16:13; Eph. 6:17; 2 Pet. 1:21). It is only through the work of the Spirit that we come to know of God, our sins, the atonement provided through Christ, and our need for repentance and obedience. **Blasphemy against the Spirit is unforgivable because its source is a heart of malice, selfish preference of wrong over right and evil over good, and a willful refusal to believe.** The Pharisees had revealed their hearts were evil, and Jesus called them a "brood of vipers" (Matthew 12:34). Such a perverse spirit consciously & deliberately rejects the truth and thus the salvation it brings.

"Either in this age, or in the age to come" (Matt. 12:32) simply means "never."
In Mark's account, Jesus called it an "eternal sin" (3:29). As long as a person persists in this state, genuine repentance is impossible. **There is no room in this person's heart for penitence, which is a prerequisite for forgiveness. His sin is unpardonable simply because he is unwilling to travel the road that leads to pardon. The only sin that God is unable to forgive is the unwillingness to accept forgiveness.**

Mark's use of the imperfect tense in 3:30, "because they were saying," implies a continued rejection of the truth on the part of the scribes: they **"kept on saying"** that he had an unclean spirit. The **continuous refusal** to respond to the guidance of the Spirit of God as revealed in his word may **eventually lead to a state of moral insensitivity. Grieving (Eph. 4:30), resisting (Acts 7:51), and quenching (1 Thess. 5:19) the Holy Spirit may lead one to become so calloused that he will not even hear the truth.**

Conclusion

There is such a thing as opposition to divine influence that is so persistent and deliberate, because of continual preference of darkness to light, that repentance, and forgiveness become impossible. The Old Covenant made a distinction between sins committed unintentionally, for which atonement could be made & those sins committed in **open defiance** of God. The person who acts "defiantly ... , is blaspheming the Lord ... , has despised the word of the Lord and has broken his commandment . . . , shall be completely cut off; his guilt shall be on him" (Num. 15:30-31). **The Hebrews writer said it is impossible to renew to repentance those who crucify the Son of God afresh, placing themselves in a state of open repudiation of the only way of salvation (Heb. 6:4-6). For them "there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins" (10:260. They have sinned the sin "unto death" (1 John 5:16).**

The gospel is God's power to salvation. But we must have an honest and good heart to receive it. "He who has ears, let him hear."

WHAT IS BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT?

According to Bruce Demarest, generally speaking, the term *blasphemy* “connotes a word or deed that directs insolence to the character of God, Christian truth or sacred things.” However, with regard to the Holy Spirit in particular, Augustine thought that the biblical texts concerning the blasphemy against the Spirit raise “one of the greatest difficulties for theological understanding” to be found in Holy Scripture.³ Each of the Synoptic Gospels makes reference to this sin. In broad terms, blasphemy against the Son of Man may find forgiveness in this life (cf. Matt. 12:31; Mark 3:28; Luke 12:10), but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit finds forgiveness neither in this life nor in the life to come (cf. Matt. 12:32; Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10). **It is an eternal sin. Hence it has become known as the unpardonable sin.** Some other biblical texts have also been identified as describing unpardonable sins, if not the same one on view in the Gospels. **These texts include the warning passages found in Hebrews 6:4–8 and 10:26–31, which speak of falling away and “sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth.” Also 1 John 5:16 is adduced by some as further evidence of an unpardonable sin (“sin that leads to death”).** References to this kind of sin, when read in the Gospels (or Epistles), have made many a sensitive Christian conscience very alarmed. What then is on view in these accounts, according to church leaders and theologians past and present?

A Sin No Longer Possible

One view, championed by some major figures in the early church, argues that since Jesus no longer walks the earth performing exorcisms, this sin is no longer a possibility. It was only possible before the ascension of Christ, but not after. Chrysostom (c. 347–407) and Jerome (c. 342–420) held this position. This ancient line of interpretation has some contemporary advocates. A dispensational variation of this view is that the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit was a specific sin of unbelieving Israel in the time of Jesus. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, for example, argues that: **“The unpardonable sin, or the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, is defined, therefore, as the national rejection by Israel of the messiahship of Jesus was while He was present and claiming He was demon-possessed”⁵ (the strange syntax is in the original).** He claims further that: **“The consequence for Israel is the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, fulfilled in A.D. 70” (the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans).**

A Sin Still Possible

According to Reformed theologian Louis Berkhof, there are a number of New Testament texts that are thought to refer to the unpardonable sin “or blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. The Savior speaks of it explicitly in Matthew 12:31–32 and parallel passages; and it is generally thought that Hebrews 6:4–6; 10:26, 27 and John 5:16 [sic., actually 1 John 5:16] also refer to this sin.” After briefly examining the relevant New Testament texts, he concludes:

It is evidently a sin committed during the present life, which makes conversion and pardon impossible. **The sin consists in the conscious, malicious, and willful rejection and slandering, against evidence and conviction, of the testimony of the Holy Spirit respecting the grace of God in Christ, attributing it out of hatred and enmity to the prince of darkness.**

He maintains that the Gospel texts about sinning against the Holy Spirit and Hebrews 6:4–6 and 10:26, 27, 29 and 1 John 5:16 are referring to the same sin. However, he offers a qualification; namely, that the warning passage in Hebrews 6 “speaks of a specific form of this sin, such as could only occur in the apostolic age, when the Spirit revealed itself [sic.] in extraordinary gifts and powers.”

Arminian theologian J. Kenneth Grider is not convinced that 1 John 5:16 is relevant to the discussion. According to him, the Johannine text refers “to a sin which carries the death penalty in civil law.” The church is not necessarily to pray for someone so condemned, if such praying aims at the alleviation of the penalty. How Grider arrives at this view is not clear. As for the Gospel texts, these refer to that sin where a person knowing full well that the Holy Spirit is the source of Jesus’ ministry attributes it to an evil spirit instead. Grider’s Arminianism becomes especially apparent when he suggests that such a sin “is unpardonable because the person himself sets himself into this kind of stance and *will not let God transform his mind and forgive him*. It is therefore unpardonable more from man’s standpoint than from God’s—for we read elsewhere in Scripture that God will graciously forgive anyone who asks for pardon.” Miroslav Volf argues similarly: “*There are no unforgivable sins. There are no unforgivable people.*” A reviewer of Volf’s book on grace, John Wilson, rightly raises the question: “What about the sin against the Holy Spirit?” Volf’s answer is: “**That is the sin of closing oneself off to the One through whom God forgives all people and all sins.**”¹⁶ However, **this approach seems to turn the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit into the sin of unasked-for forgiveness.** Also writing from an Arminian stance, John B. Nielson maintains that the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is not to be confused with the sin leading to death of 1 John 5:16, nor with the apostasy referred to in Hebrews 6 and 10. He argues: “Jesus limits the unpardonable sin to the intention of attributing the work of the Holy Spirit done in Christ to the power of Satan.”

BIBLICAL TESTIMONY

In Matthew, Jesus warns the Pharisees about this sin. He has just cast out a demon. But their response is to attribute the exorcism to Beelzebub, the prince of demons. In the Matthean account Jesus counters: “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt. 12:28). The pericope ends with Jesus issuing a generalized warning which is addressed to “whoever [*hos*] speaks a word ... against [*kata*] the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 12:32). In Luke, Jesus warns the disciples—not the Pharisees this time—about the sin. The warning is applicable to “the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit” (Luke 12:10). Mark does not name the Pharisees but refers to “the scribes who came down from Jerusalem” (Mark 3:22). The Markan account is more specific: “but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin—for they had said, ‘He has an unclean spirit’ ” (Mark 3:29–30).

A common interpretation has been to suggest that on view in these accounts, whether addressed to Pharisees (outsiders) or scribes (outsiders, perhaps also Pharisees) or disciples (insiders), is unbelief or impenitence. In the patristic era Augustine held this view, as did Melancthon in the Reformation period. The unbelief reading has had, then, a long history in the church.

Another interpretation is that the sin refers to a specific deed: knowingly attributing Jesus' miraculous works to Satan rather than to the Spirit of God. **In contrast to blasphemy against the Son of Man (Jesus), which may flow from ignorance, this sin is malicious in intent. Good has become evil.** Louis Berkhof championed this reading, as we have seen. The person who so describes Jesus is so locked into the abyss that the sin is unpardonable, either because God will not forgive such a blasphemy, or because such a person will never embrace the proffered grace of God.

A still further interpretation maintains that **Luke 12:10 has the specific sin of apostasy in mind.** Unlike the Matthean and Markan accounts, this text is unconnected to the Beelzebul controversy. Jesus addresses disciples (his *philoï*, "friends") in this context. The backdrop is a warning concerning the Pharisees: "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees" (Luke 12:1). (Is this leaven their false view of Jesus?) Then Jesus warns the disciples still further about not fearing those who can kill only the body as opposed to the soul (Luke 12:4–7). Against that background the disciples are encouraged to acknowledge Christ before others in contrast to denying him (Luke 12:8–9). Speaking a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be (Luke 12:10). Next, Jesus speaks of the disciples having to face the authorities for their faith, but the Holy Spirit will teach them what to say (Luke 12:11–12). Because of these elements in the context some have suggested that for Luke **apostasy under hostile pressure is tantamount to blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.** However, it is difficult to account for Jesus' intercession for Peter, Peter's denial of Christ, and Peter's subsequent reinstatement on this view (cf. Luke 12:8–12; 22:54–62; 22:31–34).

Yet another possibility has been suggested by H. A. G. Blocher. To ascribe the Spirit's works to demonic power is fatal. The Spirit is the one who draws us to Christ without whom there is no forgiveness. Blocher contends: "To oppose the Spirit, refusing to be convinced by his witness to the only way of salvation, it [sic., is?] to deny oneself access to salvation."

Still another suggestion, that of Graeme Twelftree, is that the incident narrated in Acts 5:1–5 concerning Ananias and Sapphira is a Lukan example of the unpardonable sin or blasphemy against the Spirit. The suggestion is an interesting one. A specific deed is on view in the text. Ananias and Sapphira sin against the Holy Spirit by misrepresenting how much they had donated to the needs of the community. A better analogue perhaps is the Corinthian situation, where some had died because of their abuse of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:30). There are sins, it seems, that are worthy of removal of the perpetrator from this life.

One further suggestion is worth noting. Michael Welker contends that the blasphemy against the Spirit is nothing less than **"disregarding God's intervention in the world of human beings.** Jesus' warning then is "directed against **those who take the last hope away from others** [because the Pharisees and scribes are religious authority figures their judgment of Jesus will be listened to by the poor], and who obstruct their own access to a last hope."

My own view is that Jesus warned the Pharisees and scribes that they were in danger of committing the sin, not that they had committed it (*enochos* may be translated “liable”). They had attributed Jesus’ work to the devil, but that mere attribution was dangerous, not yet deadly. More than a specific deed appears to be in mind as Jesus spoke. Persistent willful rejection of Jesus and thus of the Spirit’s revelatory work through him, together with depicting such work as an evil, results in no forgiveness in this life, or in the world to come. O. E. Evans comments:

To call good evil in this way is to deliberately pervert all moral values, and to persist in such an attitude can only result in a progressive blunting of moral sensibility, the ultimate conclusion of which will be to become so hardened in sin as to lose forever the capacity to recognize the value of goodness and to be attracted to it. To reach such a state is to be incapable of repentance; the sinner has shut himself out, irrevocably and eternally, from the forgiving mercy of God.

Even so, the very fact that Jesus reasons with his opponents suggests that they had not yet crossed the line of no return. In other words, simply saying “He has an unclean spirit” or even temporarily thinking it is not sufficient to have committed this calamitous sin.

In sum, the blasphemy against the Spirit is that self-righteous persistent refusal to embrace the offer of salvation in Christ: his ministry of restoring his Father’s broken creation. It is to set one’s face against the Spirit’s testimony to Christ as the Son of Man with the authority to forgive sins. The problem is the human heart settled in opposition to God. Without repentance there is no forgiveness. As Mark E. Biddle suggests: “Thus, all three traditions [the Synoptic Gospels] regard failure to recognize Jesus as the ultimate sin.”³⁴ Of course, the person who persists in the view that Jesus was an agent of the prince of darkness would exemplify such a sin.

Louis Berkhof, writing as a Calvinist theologian, argues: “We may be reasonably sure that they who fear that they have committed it and worry about this, and who desire the prayers of others for them, have not committed it.” And J. Kenneth Grider, writing as an Arminian theologian, counsels: “The most important thing to remember about the unpardonable sin is that anyone who fears that he has committed it, and is concerned about the matter, hasn’t.”³⁶

Moreover, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is not being angry with God. There are many laments in Scripture, especially in the Psalms. The Bible also gives us the language of *lament* (Psalm 22). Lamenting to God, whether in anguish or anger, is not to commit the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. It is to be real. I suspect God prefers to be related to in anger by his children than not to be related to at all. ACTS needs to be LACTS to do justice to the pastoral wisdom of Scripture.

CONCLUSION

Reading Scripture can be a sobering experience. God is not only love (1 John 4:8). God is also light (1 John 1:5). Scripture not only contains words of incredible invitation, love, and hope (e.g., John 3:16). It also presents warnings of the direst kind (2 Thess. 1:5–10). The blasphemy against the Spirit is found amongst the warnings, and it is a sin that has eternal consequences. Attributing the source of Jesus' healing power to Satan is to slander the Holy Spirit and is symptomatic of an attitude to God which, if settled and never abandoned, leads only into a darkness without end. This sin is against the Holy Spirit. Moreover, there is a nexus between Christology and pneumatology in this regard; Jesus' ministry is deeply disvalued in this sin. **In my view, this is a sin of the outsider, not the insider. Any Christian disturbed as to whether they have committed this sin needs to be encouraged to think that they have not.** The tender Christian conscience is a sign of hope, not evidence for despair.¹

¹ Cole, G. A. (2008). [*Engaging with the Holy Spirit: Real Questions, Practical Answers*](#) (pp. 19–34). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

Matthew 12:31–32

Robert F. Turner

“WHOSOEVER SHALL SPEAK A WORD against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come” (see Matthew 12:22–37; Mark 3:21–30).

When Jesus cast out a demon, restoring sight and speech to one who had been blind and mute, the people (as a whole) were amazed, and said, Is not this the Son of David (Messiah)? But *when the Pharisees heard* (the people’s reaction) they said He cast out demons by Beelzebub, prince of demons. *Knowing their thoughts* Jesus presented three arguments which erased all excuse for such a charge. (1) Though wicked, Satan is no fool; and this would pit Satan against Satan. (2) Without affirming or denying the validity of their claims, He asked, “By whom do your children cast them out?” (Why charge me with Satanic power, when lesser works of exorcist Jews are thought to show the power of God?) Then, picking up the “Son of David” theme, (3) “But if I *by the Spirit of God* cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you.” The Lord’s power over Satan was clearly demonstrated, yet they rejected the Messiah who could give them victory. *At this point He issued His solemn warning regarding blasphemy.*

There were three classes of people in His presence. (1) Those who accepted His works at face value and leaned toward a logical conclusion—Messiah! (2) Mark records some friends saying “He is beside himself” (alluding to His zealous activities). These were foolish charges, made in ignorance or through lack of a fully developed faith. (3) The Pharisees, who could deny neither His works nor His logic, but for wicked and malicious purposes railed against Him. Note, their slander was prompted through envy, by the praise of others; and Jesus knew their thoughts. Could we, envious of God’s work in others, assign that work to Satan?

Robertson and McGarvey think these Pharisees *committed* blasphemy against the Holy Spirit in making their “Beelzebub” charges. McKnight thinks they were being *warned* that following the resurrection (the ultimate confirmation by the Spirit, Romans 1:5) such charges could not be forgiven. Foy E. Wallace, Jr., thinks the distinction in blasphemy against Jesus and the Spirit relates to *time*. He broadens blasphemy against the Spirit to include *repudiating the Spirit’s testimony in the gospel age*. Compare this view with Hebrews 6:4–8; 10:26–29; 1 John 5:16. (See *Mission and Medium of the Holy Spirit*, F. E. W. Publications, 1967.)

Jesus is not making a distinction in God the Son and God the Spirit (i.e., you may blaspheme one but not the other). The contrast is between “Son of man” *in His earthly work*, which some did not understand and in ignorance and unbelief might blaspheme; and in that which some *perceived to be of God*, but which, for wicked purpose, they deliberately and maliciously defamed. In many ways this is the difference in sin done “unwittingly” and that done “with a high hand” (Numbers 15:22–31). Paul said he was before “a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: howbeit I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief” (1 Timothy 1:13). What he did was no less sin. It was called blasphemy, but it was obviously different from “eternal sin.”

Alford says it is not a particular species of sin which is here condemned, but a definite act showing *willful determined opposition* to the present power of the Holy Spirit. Meyer says the impossibility of forgiveness is grounded in the sinner's state of heart, which has become extremely hostile toward God. When someone asks, fearfully and concerned, if they may have committed the sin against the Holy Spirit, I usually tell them their very concern indicates they have *not*. The act (defamation by verbal declaration) must not be lightly dismissed, but it is more than unseemly words. The context couples this with the attitude or source of the sin. In Matthew's account Jesus continues His warning by saying, "How can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (verses 33–37).

Only an "honest and good" heart can bring one to the Lord (Luke 8:11f). Having come, we must serve Him with the heart, mind and spirit (Romans 1:9; 2:29; 7:25). We will "miss the mark at times, and all sin is against God (Luke 15:21), but God forgives the confessing penitent heart (Hebrews 4:12–16). *This is acceptance and abiding in God's Spirit.* But there is a "flip side." Rejection and blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, although bound to specific conduct in the example set before us, has a wide range of application. ***It is a fatal "heart disease," to which those with a proud and stubborn heart are most subject. Sinful hearts may resist the work of the Spirit for a time (Acts 7:51), and yet be forgiven (verse 60). But when one, out of a wicked and rebellious heart, assigns the work of God to Satan, knowingly and deliberately rejects every legitimate offer of mercy; treats evil as good, and good as evil—that one separates himself from all hope of forgiveness. He has sinned the "eternal sin" and sealed his destiny in hell.***

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² Turner, R. F. (1985). [The Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit: Matthew 12:31–32](#). (B. Lewis, Ed.) *Christianity Magazine*, 2(4), 12.

Church Debate: Can We Sin This Sin Today?

Blasphemy Of The Holy Spirit

Daniel F. May

Over the years, there has been a great deal of discussion on the subject of the "unpardonable sin" or blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Many have been confused over the apparent contradiction between two widely accepted facts: (1) That blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is unforgivable (Matt. 12:31, 32; Mark 3:29) and (2) That the blood of Christ can wash away all sin (Acts 22:16; 1st John 1:9). This confusion has led some to fear that they may have committed this sin unknowingly, and thus are destined to an eternal Hell. Such confusion and subsequent fear is sad and totally unnecessary. It is this writer's hope to dispel such in the clear light of God's word.

The difficulty with this subject lies in two areas: (1) Who and what are involved in God's law of pardon, and (2) What is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit? When these two areas are examined and understood, the apparent contradiction is shown to be non-existent and confusion and fear are eliminated.

Who And What Are Involved In God's Law Of Pardon

*There are four persons involved in the action of forgiving sins. **First, there is God.** He is the One who is sinned against (Acts 5:4). He is the One who has set the conditions for removing sin and gaining salvation (Matt. 7:21). And He is the One who ultimately forgives the sin (Luke 23:34). **Next there is Christ.** He is the One who "offered up Himself" for sin (Heb. 7:27). And He is the One who is ever at the right hand of God, making intercession for us (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25). **Next, there is the Holy Spirit.** He is the One who was sent to "convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). He is the One who delivered the glorious gospel concerning the sacrifice of Jesus and God's conditions of forgiveness (Eph. 3:1-5). **Finally, there is Man.** He is the one who commits the sin, either by falling short of, or going beyond what God has said. He is the one who must believe the message of the Holy Spirit. He is the one who must take advantage of the sacrifice of Jesus by complying with the conditions of pardon that God has outlined in the revelation of the Holy Spirit. The conditions for the man who is not a Christian are: (1) Belief in Jesus as the Son of God; (2) Repentance of sin; (3) Confession of faith; (4) Baptism in the name of Jesus (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 10:10; Acts 22:16). For the erring Christian, God's law of pardon demands: (1) Repentance of sin; (2) Confession of sin; (3) Prayer for forgiveness of sin (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9).*

When these things are accepted and acted upon, then God has promised to pardon us of our sin. The slate is clean and it is as if we had never sinned. If we fail in any part, then we remain in our sin. That too is a part of God's law (Matt. 7:21; Luke 6:46).

What Is Blasphemy Of The Holy Spirit?

Jesus warned the Pharisees that they were in danger of committing this sin in Mark 3:28-29. He said, "Verily I say unto you, All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme; but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" (see also Matt. 12:31-32). In the context of this statement by Jesus in Matthew's account, one can clearly see the actions of the Pharisees which brought on this warning. A man was brought unto Jesus, "one possessed with a demon, blind and dumb" (Matt. 12:22). The text simply say, "and he healed him." The multitudes were amazed and wondered if this Jesus really was the promised Messiah. The Pharisees, fearful of losing their &4preeminence" in the eyes of the people, claimed that Jesus cast out the demon by "Beelzebub, the prince of the demons." In so doing, they hoped to discredit Jesus as being a man of God and, consequently, as the Messiah. Jesus, knowing their thoughts, **first showed them how illogical their argument was by the illustration of a house being divided against itself and its ultimate failure. He then warned them concerning the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.**

To speak evil of Christ, to reject Him as the Messiah and even to kill Him could be forgiven. On the other hand, to speak abusively & contemptuously concerning the Holy Spirit, to attribute the power of the Holy Spirit to Satan, and to reject the witness of the Holy Spirit who was given to prove that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:30, 31), was a sin that would never be forgiven. **The reason for this was that there would be no other witness given to cause them to accept Jesus, and repent of their sins. Having rejected the final witness, and there being no other witness to "convict" them "in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment," they would not repent. And without repentance there is no forgiveness (Luke 13:5).**

How does such relate to us today? Is it possible to commit this sin still today? Yes! Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit occurs when one has viewed all the evidence that the Holy Spirit has revealed (i.e., the Bible) and rejects that evidence as being false and of man or Satan. With no evidence left, it having been "once for all delivered" (Jude 3), there is nothing to convince us or convict us and cause us to repent. Again, without repentance God will not forgive us of any sin.

In Hebrews 10:26, the writer says, "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins."

Literally the writer is saying if we "go on sinning willfully. . . ." The context fully describes the character and actions of this type of individual, who knowing the truth, discards it and willfully continues in sin. Notice verse 29. He is a person who (1) treads underfoot the Son of God, (2) counts the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and (3) hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace.

Instead of honoring Christ, he walks on Him, treating Him like dirt. Instead of thankfulness for the blood of Christ, he treats it as being common and unclean. And instead of respecting and honoring the witness of the Holy Spirit, he blasphemes. In this case it is easy to see why the sin of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. It is because the testimony of the Holy Spirit, the "truth" of Hebrews 10:26, has been rejected. That "truth" included the atoning sacrifice of the blood of Christ. That sacrifice being "once for all" (Heb. 7:27), when it is rejected "there remains no sacrifice for sins" and consequently no forgiveness.

In Hebrews 6:4-6, essentially the same thing is stated as in the gospel accounts of Matthew and Mark and in Hebrews 10. Jesus said that blasphemy of the Holy Spirit would not be forgiven, but He did not go into detail as to why. **In Hebrews 10:26, we saw that in rejecting the witness of the Holy Spirit, the acceptance of the sacrifice was also rejected, and so there remained no sacrifice for sin, and thus, no forgiveness.** Here in Hebrews 6, the reason why forgiveness is impossible is because, having "once been enlightened. . . . made partakers of the Holy Spirit. . . and then fell away," rejecting the evidence as false, it is now impossible to renew them unto repentance. Why? Again, because there is no other witness given to convince one of the truth and convict him of sin. When one rejects the Holy Spirit and His testimony, he effectually closes the door to repentance and forgiveness. **That is why Peter said "the late state is become worse with them than the first" (2 Pet. 2:22). There is no new witness, sacrifice, or condition of pardon waiting to be revealed. Such a sin "hath never forgiveness."**

One can never know if another has, in fact, blasphemed against the Holy Spirit. God only knows. It may be that there is some evidence, some witness of the Holy Spirit contained in Scripture that that person has not seen, and when he is shown it he will have his eyes opened to the truth and believe, repent and submit to God's law of pardon. That is why we must continue to preach and teach God's word.

We need not fear that we may have, at one time or another, inadvertently committed this sin. **It is not a sin that one slips into**, but one that is done in high-handed rebellion against God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. It is hoped that the purpose of this writing has proved to be fulfilled in understanding what the "unpardonable sin" is. - Guardian of Truth XXVIII: 4, pp. 116-117

What Is the Eternal Sin?

By [Wayne Jackson](#)

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“What is the ‘eternal sin,’ mentioned in Mark 3:29? Can it be committed today?”

Here is the text that is the focus of this question.

“Verily I say unto you, All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they shall have blasphemed: but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin: because they say, ‘He has an unclean spirit’” (Mark 3:28-29).

Jesus Christ is the author of the above warning, and he was speaking to certain Pharisees. In order to see the more complete background of this episode, one must compare Mark’s record with that of Matthew 12:22ff (see also Luke 11:14-23).

The Background

On a certain occasion when he was in Galilee, the Lord Jesus encountered a man who was possessed of a demon, with the result that the unfortunate gentleman could neither see nor speak. Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Mt. 12:28), cast out the evil spirit. The people nearby, when they saw the miracle, were amazed, wondering out loud, “Could this be the son of David?” The expression, “son of David,” was the equivalent of “Messiah” (cf. Mt. 22:42).

When the Pharisees observed this excited reaction by the multitude, they bristled with envy (resenting the teaching influence of Jesus). They thus charged: “This man does not cast out demons except by the power of Beelzebub [Satan].”

It is important to observe that they did not deny that a supernatural event had occurred. They disputed only the source of power by which the sign was done, transferring such from the Spirit of God to Satan.

The Application

There are some very important facts that are essential to understanding the dramatic nature of Christ’s warning about the “eternal sin” in this context.

The sin being condemned was not a mere impulsive exclamation that denigrated the Holy Spirit, i.e., blasphemous words uttered rashly that, once they leave the lips, condemn a person forever — no matter what his disposition in the future.

One must remember this fact. **Paul himself had been a blasphemer.** In his first letter to Timothy, he conceded that prior to his conversion he was “a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious.” Nonetheless, he received pardon, because his conduct, bad as it had been, was **done in ignorance and unbelief** (1 Tim. 1:12-14). Can there be any doubt that this persecutor had once spoken against the miracles of the Lord, and the Spirit by which they were performed? **Later, though, his heart was changed.** His subsequent faithful obedience is history.

But the case of the Pharisees who were involved in this conflict with Jesus was far different. Note the specificity of Mark's description of these critics' actions. The inspired writer describes their conduct in this way: "because they said (**elegon** — imperfect tense), he has an unclean spirit" (Mk. 3:30). The tense of the verb is extremely important. It denotes a sustained activity. It was not a temporary burst of emotion. It was a seething, **determined resistance**. Professor William Lane comments as follows:

"The use of the imperfect tense of the verb in the explanatory note, 'because they were saying that he is possessed,' implies repetition and a fixed attitude of mind, the tokens of callousness which brought the scribes to the brink of unforgivable blasphemy" (p. 146).

Similarly, Edmond Hiebert commented: "*Said*, looking back to the charge in verse 23, is imperfect tense, marking their persistence in the malicious charge" (p. 102).

When one combines this grammatical fact with a subsequent comment made by Christ, the point becomes even clearer. Matthew's record supplements Mark's account with these stinging words from Jesus.

"You offspring of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Mt. 12:34).

Some grammatical points are noteworthy.

The phrase "being (**ontes**) wicked" reflects a present tense participle, and the subsequent verb "speaks" (**lalei**) also is a present form. The resolute, evil charges against the Son of God were an index to the concrete-like, malevolent quality that encrusted their hearts.

These men were not simply making an ignorant mistake. They were **deliberate**, dug-in enemies of truth. They would hang on to their sinful disposition till the end, and that rebellion would follow them into eternity, hence, an "eternal sin." One cannot but be reminded of a comment that the apostle John made regarding those of a similar disposition, "But though he [Christ] had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on him."

Then, after citing Isaiah's prophecy (Isa. 53:1) of Israel's unbelief relative to its Messiah, the apostle continued, "For this cause they **could not believe**" (emp. added). Isaiah then was referenced again (Jn. 6:10), to the effect that the sin underlying their unbelief was hardness of heart (see Jn. 12:37-41).

The "eternal sin," therefore, was a **wicked mindset** that followed these hardened rebels into eternity, where an "eternal judgment" (Heb. 6:2) would be pronounced. Moreover, an "eternal punishment" (Mt. 25:46) of unending remorse would forever haunt them, because there is no post-mortem plan of salvation (Heb. 9:27).

Is It Possible to Blaspheme the Holy Spirit Today?

It is a matter of some consternation that a few sincere, modern writers allege that the eternal sin to which Mark referred **cannot be committed today. This is a misguided exegetical mistake.** Think about the following.

Certainly, it is the case that no one today can commit the "eternal sin" in precisely the same way as did the Pharisees. Christ is not **visibly present** on earth, men do not see him performing miracles, and thus one cannot insult the Spirit in an exactly parallel fashion.

On the other hand, the following facts must be introduced into evidence.

While we do not have Jesus visibly present today, performing miracles to corroborate the authenticity of his message, there is a modern analogous situation. The documentation of those signs, as recorded in the Gospel accounts, stands as **irrefutable evidence** of the Savior's identity. Here is John's testimony.

"Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in his name" (Jn. 20:30-31).

Of special significance is the expression “are written.” In the Greek Testament, the verb is a perfect tense form, with this meaning, “that which was written, and remains so.” The perfect form, combined with the present tense, “believing [keep on believing],” underscores the abiding nature of the testimony of John’s Gospel (see Robertson, Vol. V, p. 317).

Professor Wallace says the force is that of “present and binding authority” (p. 576). In other words, the evidence for Christ’s miracles is as compelling today as it was in the first century, due to the integrity of sacred scriptures. (This case we have argued in many articles on this web site.)

It is a fact, therefore, that the validity of Jesus’ supernatural works (the design of which was to buttress his plan of redemption for mankind) is as **strong today** as it was in the first century.

Why would it not be the case that a hardened repudiation of the New Testament evidence for Christ’s supernatural power would be the equivalent in this age to what the Pharisees did during his personal ministry?

If a person **persistently rejects** the New Testament evidence that undergirds the Savior’s credibility, has he not in principle exhibited the same attitude and actions as did the Pharisees? Has he not committed an “eternal sin”? Is there any other method of redemption available to him? Tragically (for him), absolutely none!

Again, we quote from A. T. Robertson.

“[T]he unpardonable sin can be committed today by men who call the work of Christ the work of the devil. Nietzsche may be cited as an instance in point. Those who hope for a second probation hereafter may ponder carefully how a soul that eternally sins in such an environment can ever repent” (Vol. I, p. 282).

C. E. B. Cranfield provided his own barbed comment regarding this matter: “Those who most particularly should heed the warning of the verse today are the theological teachers and the official leaders of the churches” (p. 143).

Conclusion

There are two final comments that we would make regarding this matter.

First, the absolute terror that this warning strikes in the hearts of people is not the type of approach that someone would use in fabricating a religion that would be popular with the masses. It is not politically/theologically “correct.” This indirectly provides a sense of authenticity to the overall Gospel accounts.

Second, the “eternal sin” narrative contains the sobering caution that we must guard our hearts, so as to keep them always honest, and open to the reception of truth (cf. Eph. 4:19; 2 Tim. 4:1ff). When one resists the teaching of the Holy Spirit, as conveyed through the sacred Scriptures (cf. Acts 7:51), such can lead to more intense gradations of rebellion (cf. Heb. 10:29b), resulting ultimately in an eternity of unimaginable horror.

Apostasy rarely comes in leaps. Rather, it creeps up by seconds, and those seconds eventually become hours, days, and years. When those years cross the line into eternity, it is too late to remedy the condition.

Scripture References

Mark 3:29; Mark 3:28-29; Matthew 12:22; Luke 11:14-23; Matthew 12:28; Matthew 22:42; 1 Timothy 1:12-14; Mark 3:30; Matthew 12:34; Isaiah 53:1; John 6:10; John 12:37-41; Hebrews 6:2; Matthew 25:46; Hebrews 9:27; John 20:30-31; Ephesians 4:19; 2 Timothy 4:1; Acts 7:51; Hebrews 10:29

The Sin Unto Death 1 John 5:16–17

AMONG REASSURING AND EMPHATIC statements that we can confidently ask anything of God according to His will and He hears us, there is the affirmation, however, that we can ask life for any sinner, except one who sins a sin unto death (1 John 5:14–17). For one who thus sins we are not to pray. What is such a sin? How do we know who sins a sin unto death?

Views expressed as to the meaning of “sin unto death” are numerous and varied. Space does not permit delineating all of the views, even if one were to know all of them. Some explanations that have been advanced are listed as follows: (1) a sin in which one persists unto death, (2) sin against or blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, (3) an egregious sin such as murder or idolatry, (4) a sin that entails a disease resulting in physical death, and (5) a sin for which the civil power punishes with death. Some even argue that every sin can be forgiven despite what this passage states.

It is my conviction that the sin unto death is the sin against the Holy Spirit. This sin consists in a heart so hardened as to reject all incontrovertible evidence to affirm that the power by which Jesus did His miracles is of the devil, as is stated by Mark, “He hath an unclean spirit” (Mark 3:30; cf. Matthew 12:32; Luke 12:10). Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is attributing His power to an unclean spirit. His clear, powerful and overwhelmingly convincing testimony to the deity of Jesus Christ is attributed to an unclean spirit in association with Satan or Beelzebub. This sin arises from a hardened, impenetrable heart; it is wicked to the extreme of denying incontrovertible evidence.

One might well inquire why I so affirm. There is a sin unto death for which John says we should not make request. “All unrighteousness is sin,” John states (1 John 5:17). *Adikia* is the term from which *unrighteousness* is translated. It means that which does not conform to what God’s law requires. The converse of it is “sin is lawlessness,” (1 John 3:4). But among sins is one that entails death for which life will not be granted by God in response to prayer.

The “death,” *thanatos*, and the “life,” *zoe*, must correspond. One cannot be spiritual and the other physical. **It is obvious from the context that spiritual life is under view.** Therefore, one’s death from which he is delivered in response to prayer is spiritual. In 1 John 5:12, the one who has the Son has life. The one who has not the Son does not have life; he is dead. Evidently, spiritual life, union with God, is life; separation from Him is death (see Isaiah 59:1–2). But there is a sin that separates one from God **from which one is not brought to life. For the sinner guilty of this sin one is not to pray.**

Since John does not in verses 16 and 17 define the sin unto death, it is obvious that the **context should make it clear what it is.** One who rejects the Son does not have life (1 John 5:12). But elsewhere in the Scripture we are told that every sin can be forgiven except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:31–32; Mark 3:28–30; Luke 12:10). One who commits that sin is in a death (eternal) for which life is not possible. It appears evident that the sin unto death (eternal) in 1 John 5 is the **denying of the incontrovertible evidence that Jesus is the Son of God.** This condition of a **hardened, impenetrable, and impenitent heart** leaves one without the Son and therefore without life. He is eternally dead and **for him one is not to pray.**

Hebrews probably deals with the same sin in two passages. It is that same condition of obstinate heart resulting in rejection of Christ, even to the crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh and putting Him to an open shame (Hebrews 6:4–6). A willful sinning in full knowledge of the truth leaves no sacrifice for sins and this sinning, therefore, leaves one in death for which life can't be granted because **one with full knowledge rejects the Son of God in whom only there is life (Hebrews 10:26–27).**

This sin is not a general apostate state or condition. Rather **it is a specific act** which is stated as being “sinning a sin unto death.” The act is that of resisting the Holy Spirit whose testimony as to the deity of Jesus is of such a nature that one is without excuse who denies it. He is guilty of an eternal sin. His is a sin unto death (eternal). God does not give life in response to prayer for one who has so sinned.

Two treatments of this difficult passage which one might find helpful and enlightening are by Albert Barnes in his *Notes on the New Testament* (1 John 5:12–13) and by Henry Alford in his *The Greek Testament* (Volume IV, pages 507–512).

In conclusion, one must remember that this passage has presented a problem of interpretation to excellent, devout, and conscientious Bible students and scholars. Accordingly, any position taken will certainly find competent persons opposing it. Also, one should be careful not to be too assertive. Conscious of this caution, I believe the interpretation herein expressed is consistent with the words of the text, the context, and other Scriptures dealing with a sin from which there is no escape.

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³ Hamilton, C. D. (1985). [The Sin unto Death: 1 John 5:16–17](#). (B. Lewis, Ed.) *Christianity Magazine*, 2(4), 22.

Hebrews 6:4-6 and the Unpardonable Sin

by [Kyle Butt, M.Div.](#)



Forgiveness is one of the most sublime concepts in the Bible. To think that our Creator loves us in spite of grievous sins that we have committed is thrilling. And to know that the blood of Jesus can forgive us when we repent and obey is nothing short of amazing (see [Lyons and Butt](#), 2015). One of the most terrifying ideas, however, is the thought that maybe we have done things that are so wicked and sinful that we are beyond God's forgiveness. Some believe this due to an incorrect understanding of two concepts in the Bible—the unpardonable sin and a statement in Hebrews 6:4-6.

The idea of an unpardonable sin scares some people, because they believe they may have committed it, even though most of them do not have a proper understanding of what the sin actually is. We read about the unpardonable sin in Matthew 12:31-32, Mark 3:28-30, and Luke 12:10. The sin is the very specific sin of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. That means the act of speaking evil of the Holy Spirit. It was committed by those who actually saw Jesus perform miracles and attributed His power to Satan. Because no one today can see Jesus perform such miracles, then the sin apparently cannot even be committed today. Some have suggested that the sin is any sin that is unrepented of, or murder, or adultery, or various other behaviors. The text is plain that those sins cannot be the unpardonable sin. It was specifically blasphemy that was the result of seeing Jesus' miracles (see [Butt](#), 2003).

With the idea of an unpardonable sin in mind, many people then go to Hebrews 6:4-6 and are convinced that they have fallen away from God and that it is now **impossible** for them to be saved. A closer look at Hebrews 6:4-6 will show the problem with this thinking. The text reads:

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame (Hebrews 6:4-6).

Notice what the text does not say. It does not say it is impossible to **forgive** a person who has fallen away. This is in contrast to the unpardonable sin. The gospel writers describe that sin as an “eternal” sin, for which there was never any forgiveness. The text in Hebrews says that if people fall away it is impossible to “renew them again to repentance.” The difference between forgiveness and repentance is profound. The message in Hebrews 6 is not that those who fall away have committed sins that God will not forgive, it is that their hearts have become so hard that they will not repent. Thus, if a person is willing to repent, he or she cannot be one of those who have fallen away according to Hebrews 6:4-6. A similar idea is found in 1 Timothy 4:2, where we read about those who have “their own conscience seared with a hot iron.” Again, it is not that God will not forgive these people, it is that they will not repent and come back to God.

An excellent example of the difference between forgiveness and repentance is seen in the lives of Judas and Peter. In a very real sense, both of these apostles betrayed their Lord. Judas sold Him to the Jewish leaders, and Peter denied three times even knowing Him. Their actions **after** their sins, however, show that Peter was willing to repent and come back to his Savior, but Judas’ heart was so calloused he would not repent. Peter was forgiven and Judas was lost, not because Judas’ sin was so much more grievous than Peter’s, but because Judas had allowed his heart and conscience to be so seared that he would not repent.

In summary, any person who reads Hebrews 6:4-6 and wonders if he or she is a person who is without hope and has fallen away from God can easily answer that question. If that person is willing to repent of sins and obey God, that passage cannot apply to him or her.

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Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit— The "Unpardonable Sin"

by [Kyle Butt, M.Div.](#)

Through the years, numerous writers have taken on the task of explaining the comment spoken by Jesus concerning the “unpardonable sin”—blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. From these writings have come countless false doctrines, insinuations, and suggested explanations. It is the purpose of this article to explain what “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit” is not, what it actually is, and to offer comment concerning whether it still can be committed today.

Three of the four gospel accounts contain a reference to the statement made by Jesus concerning blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. These three passages read as follows.

Therefore, I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come (Matthew 12:31-32).

Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation—because they said, “He has an unclean spirit” (Mark 3:28-30).

And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven (Luke 12:10).

Each of these references to the statement made by Jesus verifies that Jesus did clearly state that there is a specific sin that “will not be forgiven.” The American Standard Version describes the sin as an “eternal sin” (Mark 3:29). Jesus defined that sin as “the blasphemy against the Spirit.” What, then, is blasphemy against the Spirit?

In order to explain this sin fully, a look at the general context of the statement is critical. Matthew’s account offers the most detail concerning the setting in which Jesus’ statement was made. In Matthew 12:22, the text indicates that a certain man who was demon-possessed was brought to Jesus to be healed. As was His common practice, Jesus cast out the unclean spirit, and healed the man of his blindness and inability to speak. After seeing this display of power, the multitudes that followed Jesus asked, “Could this be the Son of David?” (12:23). Upon hearing this remark, the Pharisees, wanting to discredit the source from which Jesus received His power, declared that Jesus was casting out demons by “Beelzebub, the ruler of demons.” Jesus proceeded to explain that a kingdom divided against itself could not stand, and if He were casting out demons by the power of demons, then He would be defeating Himself. It was after this accusation by the Pharisees, and Jesus’ defense of His actions, that Christ commented concerning the blasphemy against the Spirit. In fact, the text of Mark clearly states that Jesus made the comment about the blasphemy against the Spirit “because they said, ‘He has an unclean spirit.’ ”

Another critical piece of information needed to clarify Jesus' statement is the definition of blasphemy. Wayne Jackson wrote: "Blasphemy is an anglicized form of the Greek term *blasphemia*, which scholars believe probably derives from two roots, *blapto*, to injure, and *pheme*, to speak. The word would thus suggest injurious speech" (2000). Bernard Franklin, in his article concerning blasphemy against the Spirit, suggested:

The word "blasphemy" in its various forms (as verb, noun, adjective, etc.) appears some fifty-nine times in the New Testament. It has a variety of renderings, such as, "blasphemy," "reviled," "railed," "evil spoken of," "to speak evil of," etc. Examples of these various renderings are: "They that passed by reviled him" (Matthew 27:39). "He that shall blaspheme" (Mark 3:29). "They that passed by railed on him" (Mark 15:29). "The way of truth shall be evil spoken of" (2 Peter 2:2). "These speak evil of those things" (Jude 10). It is evident from these that blasphemy is a sin of the mouth, a "tongue-sin." All New Testament writers except the author of Hebrews use the word (1936, pp. 224-225). Furthermore, Jesus defined the term when, after referring to blasphemy, He used the phrase "speaks a word against" in Matthew 12:32.

WHAT THE UNPARDONABLE SIN IS NOT

With the working definition of blasphemy meaning, "to speak against," or "speak evil of," it is easy to rule out several sins that would not qualify as the unpardonable sin. Occasionally, murder is suggested as the "unpardonable sin." Such cannot be the case, however. First, since blasphemy is a "tongue sin," murder would not fall into this category. Second, several biblical passages show the sin of murder can be forgiven. When King David committed adultery and had Uriah the Hittite murdered, the prophet Nathan came to him, informing him that God had seen that David "killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword" (2 Samuel 12:9). When David confessed to Nathan and repented, the prophet told David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die" (12:13). And, although David was punished for his iniquity, it was forgiven. The Bible plainly demonstrates that murder is not the unpardonable sin.

Adultery surfaces as another sin put forward as unpardonable. Yet the same reasoning used to discount murder as the unpardonable sin can be used to disqualify adultery. First, it does not fit the category of blasphemy. Second, David was forgiven of adultery, just as surely as he was forgiven of murder. The apostle Paul gave a list of no less than ten sins (including adultery) of which the Corinthian brethren had been forgiven (1st Cor. 6:9-11). Adultery cannot be the unpardonable sin.

Another sin set forth as the unpardonable sin is blasphemy of any kind, not specifically against the Holy Spirit. We know, however, that blasphemy in general can't be unforgivable for two reasons. First, in the context of the unpardonable sin, Jesus clearly stated that "whatever blasphemies" men may utter (besides against the Holy Spirit) could be forgiven. Second, Paul confessed that before his conversion, he had formerly been "a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Timothy 1:13). These two biblical passages rule out the possibility of general blasphemy as the unpardonable sin.

We begin to see, then, that we cannot arbitrarily decide which sins we think are heinous, and then simply attribute to them the property of being unpardonable, especially considering the fact that even those who were guilty of crucifying the Son of God had the opportunity to be forgiven (Acts 2:36-38). Therefore, since the unpardonable sin falls into a category of its own, and cannot be murder, adultery, general blasphemy, etc., some scholars have set forth the idea that the unpardonable sin is not a single sin at all, but is instead the stubborn condition of a person who persists in unbelief.

This understanding, however, fails to take into account the immediate context of the “unpardonable sin.” Gus Nichols, commenting on this idea of “persistent unbelief,” stated: “It is true, great multitudes are going into eternity in rebellion against God to be finally and eternally lost; but it is for rejecting and neglecting pardon graciously extended in the gospel while they live, not because they have committed the unpardonable sin” (1967, p. 236). Wendell Winkler, under a section titled, “What the Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit is Not,” wrote that it is not postponement of obedience until death. The text implies that those who commit the eternal sin continue to live while having lost all opportunity of salvation; whereas those who postpone obedience to Christ (except those who commit the eternal sin) could have obeyed at any time previous to their death (1980, p. 20).

IN THIS AGE OR IN THE AGE TO COME

Jesus said that blasphemy against the Spirit would not be forgiven “in this age or in the age to come” (Matthew 12:32). Certain religious organizations have seized upon this statement to suggest that Jesus has in mind a situation in which certain sins will be remitted after death—but not **this** sin. This idea of a purgatory-like state, where the souls of the dead are given a “second chance” to do penance for the sins they committed in their earthly life, finds no justification in this statement made by Christ (nor in any other biblical passage, for that matter). R.C.H. Lenski stated that Jesus’ use of the phrase under discussion meant simply “absolutely never” (1961, p. 484). Hendriksen concurred with Lenski when he wrote:

In passing, it should be pointed out that these words by no stretch of the imagination imply that for certain sins there will be forgiveness in the life hereafter. They do not in any sense whatever support the doctrine of purgatory. The expression simply means that the indicated sin will **never** be forgiven (1973, p. 528).

As the writer of Hebrews succinctly wrote, “it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).

It also has been suggested by several writers that the “age to come” discussed by Jesus refers to the Christian Age. According to this idea, Jesus made the statement in the Jewish Age, when the Law of Moses was in effect, and the “age to come” denoted the Christian Age immediately following, when the Law of Christ would prevail. Putting this meaning to the phrase often leads the advocates of this theory to conclude that the unpardonable sin could be committed in the Christian Age, after the resurrection of Christ. As Winkler surmised, “Thus, since our Lord was speaking while the Jewish age was in existence, he was affirming that the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost would not be forgiven in (a) the Jewish age, nor in (b) the Christian age, the age that followed” (1980, p. 21). Nichols, after affirming the same proposition, concluded:

It follows that this sin, therefore, could be committed during the personal ministry of Christ, and was then committed, as we have seen, and could also be committed under the gospel age or dispensation. They could have attributed the works of the Spirit to Satan after Pentecost, the same as before (1967, p. 234).

Two primary pieces of evidence, however, militate against the idea that Jesus’ reference to the “age to come” meant the Christian Age. First, in Mark 10:30, the gospel writer has Jesus on record using the same phrase (“in the age to come”) to refer to the time when the followers of Christ would inherit “eternal life” (see Luke 18:30 for the parallel passage). This is a clear reference to life after death, since Paul said “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 15:50).

Second, Mark's account of the unpardonable sin describes the sin as an "eternal sin." The translators of the New King James Version recorded that the person who commits the sin "never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation" (Mark 3:29). Mark's account, with its emphasis on eternity, shows that the phrase simply is meant to underscore the fact that this sin will "absolutely never" be forgiven (Lenski, p. 484). It is incorrect, then, to use the phrase "in the age to come" to refer to purgatory. It also is tenuous to use the phrase to refer to the Christian Age. The best explanation, to quote Hendrickson again, is that "the expression simply means that the indicated sin will **never** be forgiven" (p. 528).

WHAT THE UNPARDONABLE SIN IS

As was noted earlier, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the only sin in the Bible that is given the status of unpardonable or eternal. In fact, Jesus prefaced His discussion of this sin by stating that, "every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men," **except** for blasphemy against the Spirit. Using the working definition of blasphemy as "speaking evil of," it becomes clear that the sin described by Jesus was a "tongue sin" that the Pharisees had committed, or at least were dangerously close to committing.

What had the Pharisees done that would have put them in jeopardy of committing the unpardonable sin? According to His own testimony, during Jesus' time on this Earth He cast out demons by the "Spirit of God" (Matthew 12:28). When the Pharisees saw that Jesus had performed a verifiable miracle, they could not argue with the fact that Christ possessed certain powers that others (including themselves) did not have. Therefore, in order to cast suspicion on the ministry of Jesus, they claimed that He was casting out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of demons. The name Beelzebub is simply another name for Satan (Franklin, 1936, p. 227), as can be seen from Jesus' reference to Satan in Matthew 12:26. Even when faced by the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit through Jesus, the Pharisees were, in essence, attributing Jesus' power to Satan, and claiming that Jesus was "Satan incarnate instead of God incarnate. It is this, and nothing else, that our Lord calls the **blasphemy against the Holy Ghost (or Spirit—KB)**" (Franklin, p. 227). Maxie Boren wrote: "The context of Matthew 12:22ff. shows clearly that this was indeed the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit—attributing the miracle done by Jesus to the power of the devil. Jesus said it was done 'by the Spirit of God' (verse 28) but they (the Pharisees—KB) said it was done by Beelzebub" (n.d., p. 1). It is clear that blasphemy against the Spirit was a definite, singular sin, which could be committed by the Pharisees during the life of Jesus.

IS THE "UNPARDONABLE SIN" THE SAME AS THE "SIN UNTO DEATH"?

John, in his first epistle, mentioned the fact that "there is sin leading to death" and "there is sin not leading to death" (1 John 5:16-17). His statement in these verses has been connected by more than a few people to Jesus' remark about the "eternal sin." It is evident, however, that this connection is based more on opinion than on textual Bible study.

First, there is no biblical evidence that connects the passage in 1 John with the Pharisees' accusation. Furthermore, the entire context of 1 John gives the Christian readers hope of forgiveness for **all** sins that they might have committed. John wrote: "All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death" (1 John 5:17). Several chapters earlier, he wrote: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from **all unrighteousness** (1 John 1:9, emp. added).

In the scope of John's epistle, any unrighteousness committed by his readers could be forgiven if the transgressor took the proper steps of repentance & confession. Apparently, the "sin unto death" in 1 John is not a specific sin for which it is impossible to receive forgiveness, but rather, is any sin for which a person will not take the proper steps demanded by God to receive the forgiveness available. On the other hand, blasphemy against the Spirit was a specific, eternal sin that never would be forgiven.

CAN THE UNPARDONABLE SIN BE COMMITTED TODAY?

The next question usually asked concerning this sin is whether or not it is still possible to commit it today. Opinions on this question certainly vary, and scholars seem to be divided in their positions. The evidence, however, seems to point toward the idea that this sin **cannot** be committed today.

First, the circumstances under which the sin is described cannot prevail today, due to the fact that the age of miracles has ceased (see Miller, 2003). No one today will have the opportunity to witness Jesus performing miracles in person (2 Corinthians 5:16).

Second, there is no other mention of the sin in any biblical passage written after the resurrection of Christ. None of the inspired New Testament writers refers to the sin in any epistle or in the book of Acts, and none offers warnings to new converts about avoiding the sin post-Pentecost. Franklin observed:

If it were possible for it to be committed, would there not have been some warning against it? Were there any danger regarding it, would the Apostle Paul, who wrote half the books of the New Testament, have failed to warn against its commission? Paul does not even mention the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. The sin in question was actually committed in the days of our Lord's ministry on earth, but it does not necessarily follow that it could be committed in His absence (p. 233).

In discussing this matter, Gus Nichols wrote: "It seems that all sins committed today are pardonable, and that all can be saved, if they will" (1967, p. 239). V.E. Howard, commented along the same lines when he stated that "there is no unpardonable sin today" (1975, p. 156).

In conclusion, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the only unpardonable sin mentioned in the Bible, and it is mentioned in the context of the Pharisees accusing Jesus of being possessed by the Devil. The context indicates that it was a specific sin, and not a series of forgivable sins, or an attitude of persistent unbelief. After the resurrection, no inspired writer mentions the sin, and no warnings against it were recorded. There is no concrete evidence that it can be committed today. The fact that it is not mentioned after the resurrection, lends itself to the idea that it cannot still be committed. In fact, the indication from passages such as 1 John 1:7,9 is that "all unrighteousness" that a person could commit today can be forgiven by the blood of Jesus. As Howard said when concluding his remarks about the eternal sin: "In the same scripture our Lord gave full assurance that every sin and blasphemy against the 'Son of man' shall be forgiven him. **Today the gospel of Christ is to be preached to every man on earth and any man on earth may be saved by obeying the gospel (Mark 16:15-16)" [p. 157].**

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Is There A Sin That Can't Be Forgiven? NO!

Can This Sin Be Committed Today? MAYBE.

THIS TYPING OF SIN LED TO



Concept of Mortal v. Venial Sin

