

Debunking Misunderstandings of the Unpardonable Sin

Often, this question is asked from the state of fear. Terrified that they have committed the eternally unpardonable sin against the Spirit, some believers live with guilt-burdened discouragement.

My heart goes out whenever I am met with a correspondence from someone who is filled with a tight and paralyzing anxiety. With panicked speech, they cry out in distress, "Have I committed the sin that cannot be forgiven? Am I forever doomed because of a single action?" While I understand that this topic can be somewhat alarming, it is important to remember that fear doesn't come from God.

"For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and love and self-control" (2 Tim. 1:7, MEV).

Anything that takes away the soundness of mind isn't of God. So if you carry uneasiness in your heart, know that God wasn't the One Who put it there. Even conviction, which can sometimes bring about a sense of sorrow over sin, is essentially hope-filled, as it presents both problem and solution at once. Compare that with ungodly fear, which is always paired with hopelessness.

First, let's look at the key verse.

"Therefore I say to you, all kinds of sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven men. Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven. But whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in the world to come" (Matt. 12:31-32, MEV).

Those are some very harsh words from Jesus. They are words

found in three of the four gospels. So, before I attempt to do any explaining, know that I am not attempting to trivialize or minimize the weightiness of the matter addressed. Jesus really meant what He said. There is certainly a sin that can never be forgiven. Of that be certain.

Jesus really meant what He meant. Jesus is very meticulous about His choice of Words, and every single one of them are inspired by the Holy Spirit Himself. "Never" really means "never."

"Forgiven" really means "forgiven."

"Never forgiven" really means "never forgiven."

Jesus really was speaking of a sin that could secure a soul's eternal damnation. That soul can never be forgiven—not in this world or the world to come, not in this age or the age to come. So we must tread reverently in our approach to understanding those very holy words. In an attempt to comfort one another, we must not lower any standards that Christ Himself has raised. Neither should we aim to inspire ease where Christ has purposed to inspire great reverence.

Study the verse from any angle, and the seriousness is still very obvious. I approach the verse, as Paul approached the preaching of the gospel.

"Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men ..." (2 Cor. 5:11, MEV).

Secondly, let's look at the verse's context.

Simultaneously curing a man's speech and sight, Jesus delivered that man from a demonic spirit. Upon seeing the marvelous deliverance, a crowd of spectators began to praise Jesus and discuss the idea that Jesus might be the messiah, the Savior of the world.

Within the crowd of onlookers was a group of Pharisees. They

were constantly looking for a means by which they could discredit Jesus. So, in response to the deliverance they witnessed, the Pharisees accused Christ of using the power of Satan to cast out demons. Jesus responded by saying: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation. And every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. Then how will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore, they shall be your judges" (Matt. 12:25-27, MEV).

Now recall that it is by the Holy Spirit's power that demons are expelled from an individual.

Jesus corroborates that truth by saying, "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or else how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad" (Matt. 12:28-30, MEV).

In the very next breath, Jesus gives us the gravely stern words we are analyzing. The Pharisees attributed the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan. That's horrifying and very chilling. What an ugly accusation!

So is that it? Is false attribution the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit?

Look at the account of Mark's gospel. His narrative includes a portion where the Pharisees say that Jesus was, "... possessed by Satan, the prince of demons. That's where he gets the power to cast out demons."

Not only did the Pharisees attribute the working of Christ to demonic power, they also accused Christ of being possessed by Satan Himself. They said that the Holy Spirit was Satan and rejected Christ's divinity.

We should have no trouble at all knowing the context of Christ's warning. For, in fact, the Scripture specifically tells us why Jesus even spoke such sobering words in the first place.

"For they said, 'He has an unclean spirit.'" (Mark 3:30, MEV).

Thirdly, we must understand the word itself. Blaspheme here is the Greek term blasphemia.

(Side note: Interestingly, it's a feminine noun.) It is slanderous speech against the divine. It is injurious speech. This is why Jesus used the phrasing, "who speaks against the Holy Spirit..."

So we can rule out some of the sins that are commonly pegged as the "unpardonable sin": murder, suicide, fornication, witchcraft, adultery and so on. Those sins cannot be the unpardonable sin, because they are not sins of speech. Furthermore, even general blasphemy against God can be forgiven, as Jesus makes perfectly clear when He declared, "all sin and blasphemy can be forgiven..." Of course, He went on to specify the exception. Jesus was very specific with His message, and it is that specificity that makes the unpardonable sin more difficult to commit.

Now some suggest that the unpardonable sin is the sin of consistent and stubborn unbelief. In other words, it's "unbelief until death." That cannot be true. Otherwise, how could one be marked as unforgiveable "in this world," as Jesus put it? That one can be beyond God's forgiveness in this world means that the sin can be committed on this side of eternity. Plus, the idea, that the unpardonable sin cannot be committed while one is living, completely ignores the original context where the matter was first addressed.

The Pharisees had either committed the sin or were otherwise perilously close to committing the sin. So what was it that they did?

They claimed that the Holy Spirit was Satanic, and they basically called Christ Satan. They witnessed the obvious working of God among them yet denounced Christ. Recall that all spirits against Christ will deny His Lordship.

“Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus be cursed!’ And no one can say, ‘Jesus is the Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:3, MEV).

Therefore, it is not possible for a Christian to commit this sin.

“But I told you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. All whom the Father gives Me will come to Me, and he who comes to Me I will never cast out” (John 6:36-37, MEV).

Even still, by a non-believer, it is not easy to commit. The unpardonable sin is a very intentional one; you cannot commit it by accident.

The Pharisees stood before Christ in the flesh. Faced with an obvious miracle, they stubbornly denied the work of Christ. And, in an effort to deny an obvious work of God, the Pharisees blatantly blasphemed what they probably knew to be divine, though they were too prideful to admit it. Furthermore, the Scripture doesn’t indicate whether or not the Pharisees had actually committed the sin.

The one who commits the unpardonable sin is so against the Holy Spirit that they move beyond the ability to repent of sin. The Holy Spirit will only convict the sinner who has the ability to repent. Otherwise, why would He convict them?

“But I told you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. All whom the Father gives Me will come to Me, and he who comes to Me I will never cast out” (John 6:36-37, MEV).

Jesus will never reject the one who comes to Him. That verse

is true even when contrasted with this section's key scripture. How then do we reconcile the two scriptures? Basically, anyone who comes to Jesus has yet to commit the unpardonable sin.

Otherwise, how could His promise to never reject anyone hold true?

Truth: Jesus promises to never reject the one who comes to Him.

Truth: The one who commits the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is rejected.

Reconciled Truth: The one who comes to Jesus has yet to commit the unpardonable sin.

Conclusion: Jesus will accept anyone who comes to Him.

We know that the one who has truly committed the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit doesn't have the ability to be convicted. For it is the Spirit Who convicts (John 16:8). If one does not have the ability to be convicted, he also does not have the ability to repent.

So, if you are worried that you have committed the unpardonable sin, you haven't committed it.

If ever you turn toward Christ, He will receive you. I stress: we must compare scripture with scripture.

In conclusion, the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is a sin of the tongue that can be committed while you're still alive. It is a slanderous attribution of the Spirit's work. But, however one might define the unpardonable sin, it is clear that, if you have truly committed such a sin, then you will have no interest in repentance and no fear of having committed it. A desire to be forgiven and a fear of committing it are both proof that you have not committed it. When scripture is compared to scripture, we find that Jesus will never reject

anyone. That is how we know that one must very deliberately move beyond a certain point in order to commit the unpardonable sin.

However, it is a very sobering truth. {eoa}

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