

# The Unpardonable Sin

What Is Blasphemy? Can We Commit It?

## Passage in Question

In *Matthew 12:22-32* and *Mark 3:22-30*, Jesus healed a man possessed by a demon. The Pharisees claimed that He did so by the power of Beelzebul, Satan. They also said that Jesus had an unclean or demonic spirit. Jesus first pointed out the absurdity of such a claim. "A house divided against itself cannot stand," He said, meaning for Satan to work against his own forces would be ridiculous and unproductive. Then, Jesus explained that someone greater than Satan was among them, casting out demons by the power of God.

Jesus followed by saying, "Any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven. Whoever speaks 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, either in this age or the age to come" (*Matt. 12:31, 32*). In *Mark 3:29*, Jesus added, "One who blasphemes against the Spirit never has forgiveness but is guilty of an eternal sin."

What exactly is blasphemy? Blasphemy is offensive, reproachful, irreverent words uttered against God, an assault on His person, name, or nature. In this case, such offenses are aimed at the Holy Spirit. The Pharisees were calling the Holy Spirit the spirit of the devil.

## Interpretations

There are several views or interpretations of the unpardonable sin. The first interpretation is to equate the unpardonable sin to murder, adultery, homosexuality, and other shameful acts (*1 Cor. 6:9, 10*). While these sins are significant, God forgives them, and those who commit such sins can be restored (i.e.,

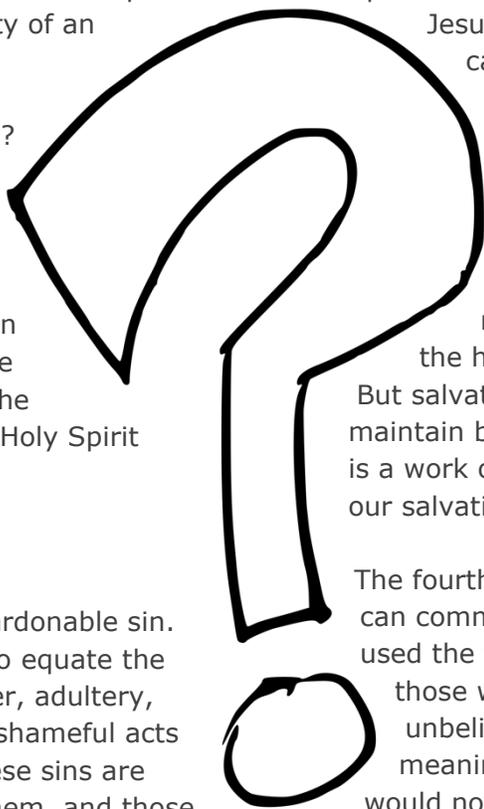
King David). Paul wrote, "Such were some of you, but you were washed and sanctified in the name of Jesus" (v.11). In other words, these sins are forgivable and, therefore, we can dismiss this first interpretation.

The second interpretation is to equate the unpardonable sin to consistent rejection and unbelief. There are people who will reject God and die in their unbelief. There are also those who claim that they believe and then fall away. But it is not beyond the power of God to draw an unbeliever to Himself through the Holy Spirit. But this view is not what Jesus meant by the unpardonable sin.

The third interpretation is that Christians can commit the unpardonable sin and fall away from Christ, never to return (*Heb. 6:4-6; 1 John 5:16, 17*). However, if a person is a true follower of Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, would he commit blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? That doesn't make sense. Remember, Jesus said, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." Just as Satan would not work against his own kingdom, neither would the Spirit of God work against His kingdom.

Also, for a true believer to reject His faith would mean that salvation is not permanent. Rather it would be in the hands of men, not our sovereign God. But salvation is not in our power to earn or to maintain because we could do neither. Salvation is a work of God (*Eph. 2:8, 9; Ti. 3:5-7*). Thus, our salvation is in good hands, safe for eternity.

The fourth interpretation is that non-Christians can commit the unpardonable sin today. Jesus used the words *whoever* when referring to those who commit blasphemy (meaning any unbeliever) and *the sons of men* (again meaning anyone). He also said that this sin would not be forgiven "in this age (His time) or the age to come (today)."



Blasphemy against the Spirit is not accidental or done out of ignorance. Rather, someone committing it is intentional or deliberate. But only God would know who has committed such sin. Even those who appear to have committed the unpardonable sin may eventually surrender their lives to Christ. While this interpretation remains a possibility, it is uncertain at best.

The fifth interpretation is that this incident was unique to the moment and cannot be repeated today. Why? The Pharisees saw Jesus (God in the flesh) perform miracles in person and were saying that He had an unclean or demonic spirit (*Mark 3:30*). Thus, they were privileged to witness the full revelation of God. They knew that Jesus was the Messiah. They knew He was God's Son, and they knew that the miracles He performed were done through the power of the Holy Spirit. Yet they dismissed all of this and credited it to the work of Satan.

Jesus is not here in the flesh today. No one has seen Him perform a miracle. No one can personally attribute His miracles to the power of Satan as they did. Therefore, the blasphemous claims that the Pharisees made that day are unique to the time and cannot be repeated.

Furthermore, if the unpardonable sin existed today, it would not reconcile with the fact that Jesus forgives us of all our sins (*Rom. 8:1, 2; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Col. 2:13, 14; 1 John 1:7-10*). Does He not remove from us the guilt of all wrongdoing? If not, then His sacrifice was insufficient to cover our debts. Therefore, in this view, to believe that there is an unpardonable sin today does not settle with the truths of the gospel.

### **Have I Committed the Unpardonable Sin?**

This issue is not one that should trouble the followers of Christ. Those who are truly saved and indwelt by the Holy Spirit will not, and cannot, commit the unpardonable sin. Those who are concerned that they might have committed the unpardonable sin most surely have not. Their concern gives evidence that the Spirit is still working and convicting of sin.

What about those who have possibly committed the unpardonable sin, as mentioned in the fourth view? If there are those who have blasphemed the Holy Spirit out of ignorance, they will be forgiven. If it is possible to commit the unpardonable sin, those who have done it don't care. Their foolish hearts are hard and darkened.

### **Unsolved Mystery**

This doctrine is difficult to understand. As you can see, there are disagreements about what it means. We may have to wait until we are with the Lord before this mystery is solved. Until then, know that your salvation is secure, and "He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (*Phil. 1:6*).