

The Sin Against the Holy Spirit

In our study of Mark we were confronted with what Jesus calls the "Unforgivable Sin." In a parallel section Jesus says: **"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).** Jesus had just cast a demon out of a man, which had awed the people. In response, the Jewish leaders countered with the statement **"This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons" (Matthew 12:24).** It is this statement that precipitates the above comment about blasphemy and warns against blaspheming against the Holy Spirit – a sin which is unforgivable.

What is Blasphemy?

In each of the parallel passages which speak about the sin against the Holy Spirit, Jesus uses the word "blasphemy". Blasphemy is speaking evil about another, or more specifically, to speak evil about God. This was so serious that Old Testament Law required the death penalty for those committing blasphemy: **"And whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall certainly stone him, the stranger as well as him who is born in the land. When he blasphemes the name of the LORD, he shall be put to death" (Leviticus 24:16).**

Jesus was falsely accused of blasphemy when He forgave the sins of the paralyzed man (Mark 2:5-7) and when He proclaimed to be the Son of God (John 10:32-33 and Matthew 26:63-65), but the real blasphemy is what was done by the Jewish leaders (Luke 22:63-65), the people at the foot of the cross (Matthew 27:39), and the criminal crucified with Jesus (Luke 23:39).

Forgiveness in Jesus Christ

But with God there is forgiveness! **"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).** When we confess our sins we are assured that we have forgiveness through the blood of Jesus Christ. **"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).** Through Christ ALL our sins are washed away!

Jesus said: **"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).** People who blaspheme Jesus can and will be forgiven. What a tremendous assurance!

Consider the criminals who were crucified with Jesus. Matthew tells us that early in the day, even the criminals - both of them - reviled Jesus (Matthew 27:41-44). But later in the day, when one of the criminals repents of his earlier sin, we hear Jesus promise him: **"Assuredly, I say to you, today**

you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). How important it is to keep in mind that with God there is forgiveness for even the greatest of sins!

Why is this Sin Unforgivable?

With this promise of forgiveness for sin Jesus includes a warning to all people. We are warned of "speaking against" or "blaspheming against" (Mark 3:29, Luke 12:10) the Holy Spirit. The person committing this sin **"never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation" (Mark 3:29).** Why is this sin unforgivable? What makes this sin so much worse than other sins?

Scripture tells us that the work of the Holy Spirit is to bring people to faith and keep them in the faith. Paul says: **"no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3).** What makes this sin unforgivable is the fact that by committing this sin a person is rejecting the Person of God who brings us to faith and maintains our faith. Committing this sin makes repentance impossible because it is directed against the one whose responsibility it is to convict us of our sin and bring us to repentance. Speaking of the work of the Holy Spirit Jesus said: **"And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8).** Since the Holy Spirit's purpose is to "convict us of sin" (John 16:8), "testify of Jesus" (John 15:26), and "teach us all things" (John 14:26), a rejection of Him and His work is unforgivable.

It must be remembered that we do not know when the sin against the Holy Spirit has been committed since we cannot see the heart. This becomes more clear when we consider of the lives and sins of God's people recorded throughout both the Old and New Testaments. While Abraham, David, and even Saul (Paul) committed horrible sins and blasphemies against God, they did not commit the sin against the Holy Spirit since they were all brought to repentance by the LORD in the end. So while we should warn about the danger of the sin against the Holy Spirit, as human beings we cannot judge when this sin has been committed since only God **"knows the heart" (Acts 15:8).**

At times people who have heard or read about the sin against the Holy Spirit have come close to despair, believing that they have committed this unforgivable sin. Those who feel such grief over their sin can be sure that they have NOT committed this sin, because those who have rejected the working the Holy Spirit can have no remorse or guilt over their sin, nor will they be even the least bit concerned about their spiritual well-being!