

**THE UNPARDONABLE SIN
OR
THE SIN OF BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT
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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Our topic is: The Unpardonable Sin, or The Sin of Blasphemy Against The Holy Spirit.
2. Our Text are: Mt.12:22-32; Mk.3:22-30; Lk.11:14-23; 12:10.
 - a. What Jesus said in these passages that could be forgiven:
 - (1) Mt.12:31,32
 - (a) “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men”
 - (b) “Whosoever speaketh (or shall speak) a word against the Son of men, it shall be forgiven him.” Same in Lk.12:10.
 - (2) Mk.3:28,29: “All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme”
 - b. What Jesus said in these passages that shall not be forgiven or that hath never forgiveness:
 - (1) Mt.12:31,32
 - (a) “The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men”
 - (b) “whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.”
 - (2) Mk.3:28,29: “He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.”
 - (3) Lk.12:10: “But unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven.”
3. Definition of the term blasphemy since Jesus said “all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men” with one exception.
 - a. Thayer, 102: BLASPHEMIA (noun) railing, reviling
 - (1) Univ. slander, detraction, speech injurious to another’s good name: Mt.12:31; 15:19; Mk.3:28; 7:21,22; Eph.4:30,31; Col.3:8; 1Tim.6:4 Jude 9; Rev.2:9.
 - (2) Specifically, impious and reproachful speech injurious to the divine majesty: Mt.26:65; Mk.2:5-7; 14:61-64; Lk.5:21; Jno.10:33.
 - b. Thayer, 102: BLASPHEMEO (verb)

- (1) “to speak reproachfully, rail at, revile, Lk.22:65; Ac.13:45; 18:6; 26:11; 1Tim.1:20; 1Pet.4:4; Mt.27:39; Mk.3:28; Lk.23:39; Tit.3:2; Jas.2:7; Jude 10; 2Pet.2:12.
 - (2) “to be evil spoken of, reviled, railed at”, Rom.3:8; 14:16; 1Cor.4:13; 10:30; Tit.2:5; 2et.2:2; Rom.2:24; 1Tim.6:1.
 - c. Thayer, 103: BLASPHEMOS (adjective)
 - (1) “speaking evil, slanderous, reproachful, railing, abusive, Ac.6:11; 2Pet.2:11.
 - (2) “a blasphemer: 1Tim.1:13; 2Tim.3:2.
- 3. Through the years different positions have been taken on this matter, as to what it is, who has or who can commit it, etc.
- 4. Through the years these passages have been the occasion of great concern even to devout, God-fearing people, some of whom have been made to wonder, even worry, if they were guilty, or had committed this sin without knowing it and thus could not be forgiven.
 - a. This concern has resulted from a misunderstanding of what Jesus was actually saying to these people who had falsely charged him with having a devil.
 - b. It is the sequel to a perversion of his teaching and is productive of the usual effect of such perversion in depriving men of the peace, contentment and happiness of soul and spirit, and the joy that God intends for us to have in Christ.
 - c. It would, in the very nature of the case, be impossible for one to “rejoice in the Lord always,” as Phil.4:4 urges us to do, if there was the slightest possibility of one having sometime inadvertently and in ignorance committed a sin, any sin, that could never be forgiven.
- 5. We ask your consideration as we examine the texts involved and the two most common positions held by brethren through the years, the first of which we always doubted, the second of which we never accepted.

II. DISCUSSION

A. FIRST, SOME PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT FORGIVENESS OF SINS BEFORE ANALYZING OUR TEXTS AND REFUTING THE TWO POSITIONS WE SHALL IDENTIFY.

- 1. John said in 1Jno.1:7. Thus all men by walking in the light can be and are “cleansed” from “**all** sin.”
- 2. John also said in 1Jno.1:9. Thus all who will confess their sins are promised forgiveness of sins and cleansing “from **all** unrighteousness”. Cf. Ac.8:22.

3. The passages of 1Jno. cannot be in conflict with Mt.12:31,32; Mk.3:28,29; Lk.12:10 because truth is not contradictory, and the word of God is truth, Jno.17:17.
4. Forgiveness of any sin is conditional. And if any sin is not forgiven, it is because the conditions of forgiveness are not met.
5. One may fail to meet the conditions either because of his ignorance of the conditions, or because of his unwillingness to do so, or because he is “unable” to do so.
 - a. Any one of these three reasons might be involved.
 - b. It is possible for one to be ignorant of (Paul was for a time), unwilling to (some Jews were, Jno.5:39,40), or even for one to reach such a state of depravity or seared conscience that he has no willingness to accept the truth and be governed by it, no matter how strong the evidence, and sink so low in the ruin of degradation that he is unwilling and even unable because of his degenerate attitude to submit to that which is right. Cf. Eph.4:17-19; 1Tim.4:1,2; Heb.6:4-6.
6. Anyone, therefore, who is interested in truth and righteousness, or who is concerned about his soul’s salvation has not committed the “unpardon-able sin” of which Jesus speaks in our texts.
7. An understanding of the passages under consideration in our study is dependent upon the context – both immediate and remote – which is always the case.
9. Thus we begin our study by identifying the two positions most commonly held by brethren on “the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit”, before moving on to an analysis of the text in context and the application of it.

B. THE TWO POSITIONS MOST COMMONLY HELD BY BRETHREN

1. The first position identified: The Jewish scribes and Pharisees committed the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit when they witnessed Jesus’ miracles of casting out devils and attributed to Jesus the power of the devil, or Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, instead of admitting his power was of the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of God.
 - a. It is claimed that they by this action had committed the unpardon-able sin and had reached a point in sin, or had sunk so low in sin, that he could not help them and that the gospel when it come would not save them.
 - b. That they as a result of having committed this sin were then and there lost, and that forever – no possibility of ever being saved, even by the gospel of Christ when it came.

2. The second position identified. They say that “the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit” of Mt.12:31,32 is:
 - a. “To sin against the Holy Spirit is to persistently reject or refuse to do what the Holy Spirit commands, or to go beyond His commands just as to sin against Jesus or against God was to sin against their commands.
 - b. “The sin against the Holy Spirit is a persistent refusal to do what the Spirit teaches through God’s inspired word – The Holy Bible.”
 - c. David Lipscomb, in the book **Queries And Answers**, edited by J. W. Shepherd, Nashville, Tn, Apr.6, 1910, pp.386,387, commenting on the question “Will you please explain for me what sinning against the Holy Spirit is? (Mt.12:31,32), said: “Until Jesus came as the ruler and representative of God, men could not sin against or blaspheme him. They knew nothing of him; so until the Holy Spirit came as the guide and ruler and gave laws, none could sin against the Holy Spirit. Then, until the Holy Spirit came, none could sin against him. This is contrary to the generally received idea, but it is the only interpretation that I can harmonize with the other scriptures...The facts seem to be about this: Jesus came and performed his mission; many rejected him. After he returned to his father’s throne, the Holy Spirit came to confirm the truth he taught and to add to his testimony; but when the Holy Spirit had performed his work, borne his testimony, there would be no further testimony or witness, and he who rejected his testimony then would be left to his own fate without further efforts to save. In other words, the Spirit would complete the testimony and would exhaust the provision that God had made for saving man. If man rejects these, there is nothing more to reach him. There would be no more sacrifice for sin or provisions for mercy. **According to this, the rejection of the teaching of the Holy Spirit and the refusal to be led by these teachings is the sin against the Holy Spirit.**”
 - d. Louis J. Sharp, Gospel Spotlight, Vol.XVI; No.30, July, 2001, pp.118,119, article **The “UNPARDONABLE” SIN!**, commenting on Mt.12:31, said: “When the Jews rejected Christ, they were guilty of **blaspheming the Holy Spirit** (his emp.), because the Spirit had given the message to Isaiah (Isa.42:1-9),

that they are now rejecting. Why no forgiveness? They **rejected the message of the Holy Spirit** (his emp.), spoken by Isaiah.

“Our problem of understanding arises over a specific sin, that is called **‘the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit’** (his emp.). (By this he means that which Jesus in Mt.12:31,32 called “the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit”, ejd)

Then he concludes on p.119: **“THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A PERSISTENT REFUSAL TO DO WHAT THE SPIRIT TEACHES THROUGH GOD’S INSPIRED WORD – THE HOLY BIBLE!”** (his emp.) Hopefully, without sounding brash or impertinent, I say, as Roy E. Cogdill used to say ‘Brethren, that’s not **nearly it, that’s it!**

e. Then, seemingly, as further confirmation of the rightness of his conclusion, he quotes from **Lipscomb and Sewell; Questions Answered; p.319; McQuiddy Pub. Co.; Nashville, Tn.; 1921:** “To sin against the Holy Spirit is to refuse to do what the Holy Spirit commands, or to go beyond His commands, just as to sin against Jesus or against God was to sin against their commands. The Holy Spirit came last, and gave the final sanction to the laws of God. To set them aside then, was to leave noting more to move the man. The sin against the Holy Spirit, I believe, is to persistently and finally reject His teaching, and refuse His testimony.”

f. However, in his article Bro. Sharp does affirm that the Jews who rejected Jesus could and some of them on Pentecost (Ac.2:21-40) did receive forgiveness because they repented and obeyed the gospel –that is, they accepted the Spirit’s message before it was too late for them. And that, in fact, there is no such thing as “the unpardonable sin.”

3. These are the two positions, the first of which I have tried to accept in time past, but always with doubts; the second, I have always rejected. I can accept neither of the two now.

C. THE TEXTS ANALYZED AND THE FIRST POSITION REFUTED

1. Take notice of what Jesus had done. He had miraculously cast out devils or evil spirits, Mt.12:22; Mk.3:10,11; Lk.11:14.
2. Note also the power by which he did it – by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, the “finger of God,” Mt.12:28; Lk.11:20.
3. Now notice the reaction of the people: they were “amazed and said, Is not this the son of David?”; “the people wondered”; “others tempting him, sought a sign of him from heaven,” Mt.12:23; Lk.11:14,16.

4. Now we come to the reaction and false charge of the scribes and Pharisees, when they condemned him for his action in casting out devils: “This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils;” “He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils;” “he hath an unclean spirit;” “He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils,” Mt.12:24; Mk.3:22,30; Lk.11:15.
 - a. They knew a miracle had been performed by Jesus; they could not deny that!
 - b. But instead of accepting it as proof of Jesus’ claim to be the Son of God as the devils or unclean spirits did (Mk.3:11), they tried to identify him with the devil, with Satan; saying that he was Satanic!
5. Note now how Jesus refuted their claim:
 - a. He did it by pointing out by means of a parable that if their charge were true it would make Satan divided against himself by casting out his own demons, or his own evil spirits, which were engaged in doing Satan’s evil work; thus Satan would be divided against himself and would be defeating his own purposes and ends; he would be destroying himself, Mt.12:25,26; Mk.3:23-26; Lk.11:17,18. His argument is that:
 - (1) Satan would not work against his own interests, because in doing so he would destroy himself and be brought to an end.
 - (2) Satan is too intelligent to do that.
 - (3) Satan is evil, but he is no fool!
 - (4) Satan works, but he never works against himself or his own purposes.
 - (5) So his miracle of casting out devils was not done by the power of Beelzebub, the chief of the devils!
 - b. Also, Jesus did it by pointing out that if their charge against him were true, then they – the Jews – condemned themselves. How so?
 - (1) This argument is based on their purported claim that their own disciples – “children” – or “sons” – cast out demons (a claim which Jesus did not admit).
 - (2) For among the Jews were “exorcists” – their own children – who claimed the power to cast out demons, Mt.7:21,22; 12:27; Lk.11:19.
 - (3) Therefore, if Jesus’ power to cast out demons was of Satan, then their exorcists’ power was also of Satan.
 - (4) Thus his argument showed the absurdity of their contention from their own premise.

- c. He next submitted that since he could not possibly be casting out devils by the power of the Devil, it must of necessity be by the power of God, Mt.12:28; Lk.11:20.
 - (1) Thus he affirmed and established that the power by which he worked his miracles was by the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - (2) This is also confirmed by Peter, Ac.2::22; 10:38; 1:2, etc.
- 6. Then Jesus declared to them the truth of what his power to cast out devils proved.
 - a. That he had power over – that he by means of the Holy Spirit was superior in power – to Satan, the prince or chief of the devils, Mt.12:29; Mk.3:27; Lk.11:21,22.
 - (1) This proved that Jesus had entered into the house (either this world or the body of the demoniac) of the strong man (Satan), which the strong man (Satan) could not prevent (he was powerless to prevent it; he could not keep his palace or his goods in peace, Lk.11:21,22), and was spoiling the strong man’s palace and goods (the evil spirit in the man and the work of the devil in the man) as evidenced by his casting out Satan’s demons or evil spirits.
 - (2) Therefore, instead of being in league with the devil, he had contested him and defeated him. See Col.2:15; Mk.16:18; Ac.2:23,24.
 - b. That “the kingdom of God is come unto you,” or “is come upon you,” Mt.12:28; Lk.11:20; cf. Mt.16:19.
- 7. The conclusion based on these arguments is that these scribes and Pharisees were wrong in their charge against him.
 - a. **Important to remember:** Their charge was not against the power of God, or of the power of the Holy Spirit; rather it was against Jesus – that he – Jesus – was in league with the Devil and not with God or the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God; that Jesus “hath a devil.”
 - b. This, Jesus disproved; he showed that it was not so and sought to correct their misconception and false charge.
- 8. In the context of this, Jesus spoke of the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, which, **if committed**, “shall not be forgiven unto men” (Mt.12:31,32); “it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come,” (Mt.12:32); “hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation” (Mk.3:29).
- 9. Some conclusions reached by most of those who hold this position:
 - a. This sin cannot be committed now by anyone and for the following reasons.

- b. It was a sin peculiar to the age of miracles by human agency. No such miracles are now being performed, nor can they be..
 - c. It was committed by those people who saw Jesus' miracles and admitted them, yet blasphemed the Holy Spirit by their charge against Jesus.
 - d. It was committed by people who lived in the Jewish age and whose lives would continue into the gospel age. Thus two ages or dispensations involved. We have no such people living now and no two ages (worlds) in which forgiveness can take place.
 - e. That these people who had so charged Jesus and to whom he was then speaking had committed the "unpardonable sin," or "the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit," and, therefore, could never be forgiven, neither in this world (age, the Jewish age), neither in the world (age, the gospel age) to come.
10. The following arguments refute this first position.
- a. Jesus prayed for the forgiveness of the very people to whom he had spoken in Mt.12:31,32, which he would not have done if they could never be forgiven, Lk.23:34.
 - b. The fact that all Jews, including the scribes and Pharisees who had so charged Jesus falsely, were offered forgiveness on Pentecost (Ac.2:21-41) is proof that they had not committed a sin which could never be for-given.
 - c. The following explanation and application is the proper one for Mt.12:31,32; Mk.3:28,29; Lk.12:10 (if not, it is the best I have ever read): "[C]ontrary to popular opinion and acceptation, Christ did not say that these Jews had committed the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit but he did say in substance that they had blasphemed against Him and He emphatically says that such will (or can) be forgiven (Mt.12:31,32; Lk.12:10). The circumstances surrounding the incident, however, do suggest to the mind of Christ a need for a warning to these people of the danger of the course they are following. They had said that He was casting out demons by the power of "Beelzebub" (the Devil). If they persisted in this contention and in the light of all the evidence became convinced that the power exercised was of God but never-the-less was still evil because it worked through Christ, whom they hated and refused to accept, then they would become guilty of the sin against which Christ warned. In this they would be charging the Holy Spirit with being a devil or being equivalent to the Devil. Certainly, they were not saying that the Holy Spirit was a devil or that He was as bad as the Devil. They were not

denying the Spirit is Holy or affirming that the Spirit is evil. They were simply denying that the Holy Spirit had anything to do with Christ's miracles. If they were affirming that the Spirit of God was not Holy but rather was as evil as the Devil, this would, of course, have been blasphemy against the Spirit and there would have been no point in Christ's having attempted to correct them by presenting the arguments that He did. They would have been beyond argument and beyond the hope of correction. They were getting on dangerous ground, however, and were approaching the point of no return. They were getting near to a condition of heart and mind which would damn their souls and Christ was simply warning them to stop before they had gone too far, not to allow their hatred and their contemptuous attitude toward Him to cause them to defame the Spirit of God. To take that step and affirm that the Holy Spirit is not holy but is evil and only evil continually, that He is a devil and on a par with Satan is to sink beyond all hope. Such a frame of mind on the part of anyone would be beyond all correction." -- From an article in my files by Charles G. Caldwell, Jr., *Blasphemy Against The Holy Spirit*, given to me when he was the preacher at Winchester Road in Memphis, Tenn.

D. THE TEXTS ANALYZED AGAIN AND THE SECOND POSITION REFUTED

1. Remember, this position says: The sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit of which Jesus spoke in Mt.12:31,32 is this: The sin against the Holy Spirit is a persistent and final rejection or refusal to do or obey what the Holy Spirit teaches through God's inspired word – the Holy Bible.
2. Jesus in Mt.12:31,32:
 - a. Made a distinction between “**all manner of sin and blasphemy**” that “shall be forgiven unto men,” and that of “**the (sin of) blasphemy against the Holy Spirit**” which “shall not be forgiven unto men, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.”
 - b. Made it clear that all manner of sin, even **blasphemy**, which is a sin, can be forgiven, but not “the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.”
 - c. Did not say that “to persistently and finally refuse to do what the Holy Spirit commands, or to go beyond his commands, or to persistently and finally reject his teaching, and refuse his testimony, is the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit
 - d. Did not say those scribes and Pharisees who false charged him had committed the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.
 - e. Did say “whosoever speaketh (does so speak) against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him.”

3. Jesus in Mk.3:28,29:
 - a. Made a distinction between “all sins...and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme...shall be forgiven unto the sons of men,” and the sin of “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit,” which when one commits it, “he ...hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.”
 - b. Made it clear that “all sins...and (even) blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme...shall be forgiven unto the sons of men,” “but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.”
 - c. Did not say that “to persistently refuse to do what the Spirit commands, or to go beyond his commands, or to refuse and to reject his teaching through God’s inspired written word, is the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.
 - d. Did not say the scribes and Pharisees who had falsely accused him had committed the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.
 - e. Did say “he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness.”
4. According to Bible usage and definition, neither disobey, resist, reject, grieve, quench nor go beyond means to blaspheme. See definitions of “**blaspheme**”
 - a. Therefore, to do either of these things is not necessarily to be guilty of the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, or to be guilty of saying the Holy Spirit is evil or of Satan or Satanic.
 - b. However, to do either of these is to reject Jesus and his word which has been revealed by the Holy Spirit, Jno.12:48; Eph.3:1-4; Gal.1:11,12.; 1Cor.2:9-13.
 - (1) It is not the Holy Spirit per se who commands us, but Jesus through the written word revealed by the Holy Spirit, Mt.3:17; 28:18-20; Mk.16:15-20; Heb.5:8,9; cf. Jno.14:26; 15:26; 16:13-15.
5. The sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit or the sin against the Holy Spirit therefore is not the same as or synonymous with:
 - a. Resisting the teaching of the Holy Spirit through the inspired word of God as in Ac.7:51.
 - b. Grieving the Holy Spirit of God by sinning in violation of the inspired teaching of the Holy Spirit as in Eph.4:30.
 - c. Quenching the Spirit by rejecting the testimony of the Spirit through the inspired word as in 1Th.5:19.
 - d. Rejecting the testimony of the Holy Spirit through the written word.

- e. A persistent and final refusal to do what the Spirit teaches through God's written word, the Bible.
 - f. "Sin unto death" of 1Jno.5:16.
6. However, anyone who dies having rejected the teaching of Jesus Christ revealed by the Holy Spirit; that is who dies in sin – in disobedience to the Lord's written word – is lost with no hope of being saved! Jno.8:21,24; Mt.7:21

III. CONCLUSION

- 1. We have identified and considered the two positions most commonly held by brethren on "the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit" or "the unpardonable sin". We have analyzed the texts and offered our conclusions based on what we see as the evidence that refutes both positions.
- 2. We ask you to give due consideration to our opposition to both positions.