



“The Unpardonable Sin”
Matthew 12:22–37
The Commission of the King

Introduction:

Many people are afraid they have committed the unforgivable sin in the past or worry they may commit it in the future and lose their salvation. So, this is a personal, practical, and deeply theological question we all need to understand.

What is the unpardonable sin? Why is it so unforgivable? Can a person commit this sin today?

A POINT OF NO RETURN (vv. 22–24)

Very few details are provided about the miraculous healing of this demon-possessed man. Matthew concentrates on the controversy that ensues, rather than the healing itself.

Verse 23 – the crowds are wondering if Jesus is the Messiah.

Verse 24 – the Pharisees claim: “This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of demons.” (cf. Matthew 9:34)

Beelzebul – a variation of Beelzebub: “lord of the flies” or “lord of the manure pile.” They claimed Jesus got his power from the “dung-god!”

It’s as if the Pharisees had crossed a line from which there is no turning back, a point of no return. They attributed the miracles of Christ to Satan. They claimed he was in league with the devil. They called his works evil.

THREE CRUCIAL CORRECTIONS (vv. 25–29)

Correction #1 – A Matter of Error (vv. 25–26)

Why would Satan fight against himself?

Correction #2 – A Matter of Hypocrisy (vv. 27–28)

Why do you claim I cast out demons by the power of Satan while claiming your disciples cast out demons by the power of God? Your bias is obvious.

Correction #3 – A Matter of Proof (v. 29)

Why won’t you recognize who I am? Clearly I have power to bind the strong man (Satan) and plunder his house (i.e. set people free from his dominion.) Clearly my kingdom is more powerful than his (v. 28). Clearly I am who the people think I am (v. 23).

BLASPHEMY OF HOLY SPIRIT (vv. 30–32)

There is no neutrality when it comes to Jesus. Either we are with him or against him (v. 30). We must decide what we believe about him. Not choosing is a choice.

Blasphemy (v. 31) – abusive speech that is intended to harm or injure someone’s reputation; reviling or defaming someone’s character; defiant irreverence; extreme slander.

Blasphemy against the Spirit is an eternal sin that will never be forgiven (cf. Mark 3:29).

What is the unpardonable sin? Various views...

Committing a really bad sin like murder or adultery. (Response = no sin is too great for the shed blood of Christ. David committed adultery and murder, but he was forgiven (2 Samuel 11–12; Psalm 51).

Making incorrect statements about the Holy Spirit, or holding incorrect beliefs about him. (Response = people may have bad theology, but they can learn and change their mind.)

Attributing the miracles of Jesus to Satan. Applies only to the eyewitnesses who saw the miracles firsthand. This sin cannot be committed by people today. (Response = Jesus is no longer present on earth, but the Holy Spirit IS... and people can still blaspheme his ministry. Other New Testament passages indicate people can still commit a sin that is unforgivable (cf. Hebrews 6:4–6, 10:29, 12:17; 1 John 5:16).

Rejecting the gospel until the end of your life and dying in your sin. The only unforgivable sin is unbelief that persists until death. At that point your fate is sealed and there are no second chances. (Response = Jesus indicated the unpardonable sin can be committed “in this age” (v. 32) – meaning during a person’s lifetime.)

Willingly and knowingly rejecting the truth about Jesus that God reveals through the Holy Spirit. Conscious and hardened opposition to the truth. A persistent, deliberate, and decisive choice that crosses a line at some point and results in condemnation.

John Calvin: “They sin against the Holy Spirit who, with evil intention, resist God’s truth, although by its brightness they are so touched that they cannot claim ignorance.”

D.A. Carson: “Blasphemy against the Son is the rejection of the gospel, but blasphemy of the Spirit is rejection of the same truth in full awareness that that is exactly what one is doing—thoughtfully, willfully, and self-consciously rejecting the work of the Spirit.”

John Piper: “The unforgivable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is an act of resistance which belittles the Holy Spirit so grievously that he withdraws forever with his convicting power so that we are never able to repent and be forgiven.”

WATCH YOUR WORDS! (v. 33–37)

Verse 33 – Jesus is probably referring to himself – i.e. “Decide what kind of tree I am. What kind of fruit am I producing? Am I of God, or am I of the devil?”

Verse 34 – The Pharisees have been calling Jesus evil. But now he calls them evil. Brood of vipers: their venomous words are full of deadly poison.

Verse 35 – Their blasphemous words revealed the true condition of their heart. The root problem was their sinful, unbelieving heart.

Verses 36–37 – Watch what you say, because your own words will justify or condemn you.

CONCLUSION

The unpardonable sin is not something a person can commit accidentally or unintentionally. It’s consciously, knowingly, willfully rejecting the truth that the Holy Spirit reveals about Christ.

- We don’t know who has committed the unpardonable sin. Many people who are opposed to Jesus later repent and come to faith in Christ. Only God knows who has committed this sin.
- If you’re worried that you may have committed this sin... that’s a good sign. It’s probably the greatest evidence that you haven’t committed it because people who have committed the unpardonable sin don’t care. Their hearts have become so hard and calloused against God that they have no desire or ability to repent anymore.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Have you ever wondered if you’ve committed the unpardonable sin? Have you ever met anyone who worried about it?
2. Which view of the unpardonable sin do you agree with, and why? Explain your own view in a nutshell.
3. What troubled you, confused you, or excited you the most about this message?
4. How can you apply this week’s sermon to your own life?