

Article: DU250

THE UNFORGIVABLE SIN

This article first appeared in the Questions and Answers column of the *Christian Research Newsletter*, volume 9, number 1 (1996). For further information or similar articles go to: <http://www.equip.org>

The date was October 21, 1962. I sat impatiently in my pew as the pastor droned on endlessly about the Pharisees and their encounters with Christ. Just when I thought he was finally finished, he began telling the story of Christ's encounter with a demon possessed man. He pointed out that the Pharisees, who were eye-witnesses of the encounter, attributed Christ's exorcism to Beelzebub, the prince of demons. Christ's comeback was captivating to me, "I tell you the truth," He said, "every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come" (Matt. 12:31-32).

Today as I write I cannot recall the exact thoughts that flashed through my mind at that moment. But one memory remains forever etched upon the canvas of my consciousness: I like the Pharisees of Christ's time had committed the unforgivable sin. My horror at this sudden realization was so traumatic that I literally felt sick. Although my anxiety subsided somewhat after Sunday's service, the following day my fears flooded back in full force.

I listened anxiously to news reports of Nikita Khrushchev's secret installation of nuclear warheads in Cuba. My terror continued to grow as I heard that John F. Kennedy had thrown down the gauntlet to the Soviets by imposing a naval blockade. Even at my age I understood that as the Cuban Missile Crisis played itself out, the world was poised precariously on the precipice of nuclear disaster.

In the ensuing hours I was virtually paralyzed by my fear. When my father returned from work, he found me lying in bed, agonizing over my impending physical and spiritual doom. "Dad," I stammered when he entered the bedroom, "I've committed the unforgivable sin... the world is coming to an end... and I'm headed for hell!"

To my utter astonishment he simply smiled. To this day I can still hear his words: "If you are truly concerned, you have not committed the unforgivable sin."

The fear I experienced in 1962 is the same fear that prompts one of the questions I am asked most frequently today on the Bible Answer Man broadcast: **"How can I know for sure that I have not committed the unforgivable sin?"**

First let me point out that my response to each and every caller is exactly the same as what my father told me: "If you are truly concerned, you have not committed the unforgivable sin." Rather than demonstrating concern, those who actually commit the unpardonable sin are cavalier about Christ and Christianity. In other words, they have no interest in His forgiveness.

The Pharisees mentioned by Matthew militantly hated Christ and attributed His miracles to Beelzebub, the prince of demons. Unlike those who are afraid they have committed the unforgivable sin, the Pharisees were totally unconcerned about Christ's forgiveness. Instead, with premeditation and persistence, they willfully blasphemed the Holy Spirit's testimony that Christ was the Son of the living God.

Passages like Matthew 12:22-37, Mark 3:20-30, and Luke 12:10 all have one thing in common. They consistently portray people who knowingly persist in rejecting Christ's messianic mission despite His miracles and the ministering power of the Holy Spirit. From a historical perspective it is important to

note that the Pharisees had firsthand knowledge of Christ's miracle working power. In addition, they knew the scriptures and thus understood intellectually that Christ was the fulfillment of messianic prophecy. Therefore, their rejection of Christ epitomized the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, let me point out that those who have committed the unpardonable sin have no godly regret. As Paul emphasizes in the book of Romans, they not only continue in their evil ways but approve of others who do so as well (Rom 1:32). Conversely, "godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation" (2 Cor. 7:10). Thus, as with the Apostle Peter, sorrow for sin and the desire for Christ's forgiveness is proof positive that you have not rejected the Savior of your soul. Three times Peter denied his Lord with vile oaths. Yet Christ forgave him.

Finally, the Bible consistently teaches that those who spend eternity separated from God do so because they willingly, knowingly, and continuously reject the gospel. John refers to this as the "sin unto death" (1 John 5:16) in the sense that those who refuse forgiveness through Christ will spend eternity separated from His love and grace.

It is not enough to know intellectually that Jesus Christ is the savior. "Even the demons believe that — and shudder" (James 2:19). To that knowledge must be added agreement and trust. If you are sick, you might have the knowledge that a particular medicine might cure you. You might even agree it has cured thousands of others suffering from the same sickness. However, until you personally receive it, you are not trusting it to cure you. In the same way, to receive Jesus Christ as the living Lord of your life, it is imperative not only that you know about Him and agree He is the Savior of the world, but that you personally place your trust in Him alone.

If you have not yet trusted in Jesus Christ as the Savior and Lord of your life, you can receive His forgiveness by:

- 1). *recognizing* you are a sinner
- 2). *repenting* of your sins and
- 3). *receiving* Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior.

Simply bow your head right now and pray: Heavenly Father, I thank You that You have provided a way for me to have a relationship with You. I realize I am a sinner. I thank You that You are my perfect Father. I ask You, Jesus, to be my Savior and Lord. I repent and receive Your perfection in exchange for my sin; In Jesus' Name I pray. Amen.

If you have prayed this prayer, you can know with certainty that you have eternal life — not based on my promise, but based on the words of Christ Himself who said, "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has (not might have or could have, but has) eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life" (John 5:24).

-- Hank Hanegraaff