

The Unforgivable Sin - Mark 3:22-30 Sermon [n]

Christ's Power Over Ever Need: Overarching theme of Mark is Christ's power over our sin. The beauty of the Christian faith is that you can walk in with guilt, shame, mistakes, strongholds, and addictions and Christ's power over those things can set you free. Forgiveness in Christ can be thought of as akin to that of a cleansing shower after a run, the blood of the lamb cleanses us of all of our sins and iniquities.

The sermon discusses the unforgivable sin, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

If the gospel of Mark highlights Christ's power over sin, how do we understand what Jesus is saying when he talks about the unforgivable sin?

Key Truths on Today's Teaching on The Unforgivable Sin:

1. All sins can be forgiven to anyone who comes to Jesus for forgiveness.
2. There is no act of sin, or thought of sin, no matter how grievous, that cannot be forgiven.
3. The unforgivable sin is referring to the sin of never coming to Jesus for forgiveness of sin.
4. The unforgivable sin is not one that a true believer in Jesus Christ can commit.

²² And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "by the prince of demons he casts out the demons." ²³ And he called them to him and said to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. ²⁶ And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. ²⁷ But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.

²⁸ "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, ²⁹ but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" — ³⁰ for they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit." **Mark 3:22-30**

The Unforgivable Sin (i.e. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit)

1. Misunderstanding what it means

The unforgivable sin is not referring to some grievous act (or thought) of sin that can never be forgiven.

v29-30:

- a. Notice the context: Jesus is engaging the scribes who are attacking him, he is not talking about living the Christian life.
- b. "for they were saying (imperfect tense), "He has an unclean spirit."

Takeaways:

1. **Because of the misunderstanding, many Christians are anxious and fearful that they might have committed (or might in the future commit) this particular sin and never be forgiven.**
2. **There is no sin that cannot be forgiven when we turn to Jesus for forgiveness!**

²⁸ “Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter,

All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ***John 6:37***

²¹ Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” ²² Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.” ***Matthew 18:21-22***

3. **Because ALL sins are forgiven in Christ, there is never a point where God might hold a sin against us, threatening to reject us.**

¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
¹² as far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our transgressions from us.
Psalms 103:11-12

v12: On this world, no matter where we are, if we go North, we end up at the North Pole. If you go past the NP, you end up going South. But when you go east to west, east never turns west. God is saying that the transgressions he removes from us is endless, from the sunrise to the sunset.

And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” ***Jeremiah 31:34***

In the verse leading up to Jeremiah 31:34, we see a contrast to the Old Covenant given at Sinai, with God promising a New Covenant written on their hearts. We see an emphasis on a personal knowledge of God (Holy Spirit) that doesn’t rely on external instruction alone, as well as complete forgiveness. We can take away that there will be a universal knowledge of God, inner transformation, and forgiveness & mercy. Cross references to Hebrews 8 and 10.

2. Understanding what it means

²⁹ but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin” —

To better understand "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit":

- This is not saying or thinking something terrible about the Holy Spirit.
- What the Holy Spirit does: convicts us of our sin and need for Jesus so as to go to Jesus for forgiveness

Understanding the meaning:

The unforgivable sin, which Jesus speaks of as defying and denying what the Holy Spirit does, refers to the sin of rejecting Jesus in such a way to never come to Him for forgiveness of sin.

Such was the danger with the scribes in our passage.

²² And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “by the prince of demons he casts out the demons.” ²³ And he called them to him and said to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.

Andrew Le Peau: "Jesus explains to the teachers of the law that it wouldn't make any sense for him to be casting our demons as an emissary of Satan. That would be like a king intentionally inciting civil war in his own country. Satan is evil, but he is not so dumb as to deploy such a strategy."

²⁶ And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end.

²⁷ But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. **Then indeed he may plunder his house.**

Jesus is saying that the strong man is Satan. He has taken captive all of us with our sin, until Jesus as the Son of God comes as the one who is greater than the strong man.

*Technical Aside:

Pastor Paul mentioned that the word plunder in v27 is the same as in the Exodus account, likely referring to Exodus 12:36. Linguistically, this is not true, as the Greek *diarpazō* “to plunder violently” and the Hebrew “*natzal*” “to snatch/rescue mean two different things. However, there is a thematic connection in the sense that in Exodus, Israel “plunders” Egypt on their way to freedom — a reversal of power where the oppressed take from the oppressors. In Mark 3:27, Jesus binds the “strong man” (Satan) to plunder his house — another reversal where Jesus frees people from Satan’s domain. In both, God or His people defeats the oppressor and takes what the oppressor held — whether Israelites or spiritual captives.

Mark 3 ESV

nimself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. ²⁷ But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.

Found 2 verses

Found 194 verses

Exodus 12 ESV

asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing. ³⁶ And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.

Found 194 verses

Found 194 verses

Key Takeaways:

- 1. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is referring to the sin of never coming to Jesus at all for forgiveness. According to Augustine, it entails a "willful persistence in impenitence and unbelief."**
- 2. Another way to understand: All sins will be forgiven if you come to Jesus except the sin of one who never comes to Jesus.**

Andrew Le Peau: "By definition, one who is in a state of utter rejection of God cannot be forgiven because they refuse to turn to God for forgiveness. But since all sins can be forgiven (Mark 3:28), should one turn from utter rejection of God back toward God, forgiveness would be possible." (Even here, as Jesus gives the warning, he opens the door for repentance)

- 3. If a person strongly rejected God and even blasphemed God, yet repents and turns to Jesus, there would be forgiveness. Case Study: The Apostle Paul!**

¹² I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, ¹³ though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

1 Timothy 1:12-14

3. Addressing Questions and Concerns

- 1) Is it possible to ever repent of the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and receive forgiveness?**

Given that the unforgivable sin is NEVER going to Jesus and seeking repentance, this question is misguided. A person who rejects and never turns to Jesus for forgiveness will not receive forgiveness. However, ANY person who turns to Jesus for forgiveness will be forgiven, thereby indicating that this person has not blasphemed against the Holy Spirit!

- 2) In Matthew's account of this teaching, Jesus says, "And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven (Matthew 12:32). What does this mean?"**

To blaspheme against Jesus can be forgiven if you repent.

One example is Jesus' half brother James, who thought Jesus was a crazy man, but later gripped by the Gospel and wrote the Epistle of James.

To blaspheme against the Holy Spirit is referring to one who rejects Jesus and never goes to Jesus for forgiveness (NT Wright's example).

Imagine someone who is sick and in desperate need of life-saving surgery. The surgeon is skilled, the tools are ready, and everything is prepared to save the patient. But the patient refuses the surgery — denies that they're sick, claims the doctor is a fraud, and walks away.

- In that case, it's not that the doctor **won't** save the person.
- It's that the person **refuses** the only method by which they can be saved.

This is how Wright explains the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit — it's not a one-time slip-up, or even deep rebellion in your past. It's the **ongoing, hardened rejection of the Spirit's work** in pointing you to Jesus, the only one who can forgive and heal.

3) "I am a Christian and I'm anxious and worried if I may have committed the unforgivable sin."

If you are a follower of Jesus and you have a tender conscience about this sin, the very fact that you're concerned about it reveals that it is not referring to you. Remember, this is referring to a person who DOES NOT care, who openly rejects and never goes to Jesus at all for forgiveness, who would never be concerned or worried about committing sin against Jesus.

Craig Blomberg: "...professing believers who fear they have committed the unforgivable sin demonstrate a concern for their spiritual welfare which by definition proves they have not committed it."

James Edwards: "Anyone who is worried about having committed the sin against the Holy Spirit has not yet committed it, for anxiety of having done so is evidence of the potential for repentance. There is no record in Scripture of anyone asking forgiveness from God and being denied it!"

For those who are anxious and concerned, consider what Jesus says:

²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. **John 10:27-29**

4) "If I am in Christ, could I ever be in danger of committing the unforgivable sin?"

The unforgivable sin is not one that a true believer in Jesus Christ can commit. The Holy Spirit indwells, guards, and keeps you! You are now united to Christ, and this union in Christ is not contingent on your power, faith, and obedience but on the firm and finished work of Jesus that is eternally secure.

Knowing this, God's people humbly turn away from their sin and go to Jesus, rejoicing in the mercy, grace and love of God.