

The Unpardonable Sin

Joe Crews Radio Sermons

The saddest spectacle in society today is a young criminal bitter against life and dedicated to vengeful violence. And the saddest spectacle in religion is the man or woman who has committed the unpardonable sin against heaven. I suppose the most fateful words of Jesus ever uttered are those found in Matthew 12:31, 32. "Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." Now many people are confused about this doctrine of Christ. There has been much speculation about the unpardonable sin. How does a person commit it and how do we know when it has been committed?

First of all let me hasten to say that God is a God of great love. He desires everybody to be saved and He had made full provision for that very end. According to the promise of 1 John 1:9, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins if we simply confess them and repent. No matter how deep down the stains of transgression go, the blood of Jesus is able to make atonement for us. Isaiah 1:18, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."

In view of these promises, why should there be such a thing as an unpardonable sin? If God has made such complete arrangements for a person to be pardoned how can he lose eternal life? Now remember, friends, this sin is not pardoned *because it is not confessed*. The only sin God can't forgive is the one that has *not been repented of*, that has not been confessed, and that is never forsaken. That's the unpardonable part of the sin against the Holy Spirit.

Now let's hasten on to examine some Scriptures to find the full answer to our question. Let's remember, first, that it is a sin. Some people think of it as suicide. Others consider it to be some terrible cursing of the Holy Spirit, and still others think of it as some dreadful immorality. But do we know, friend, what sin is according to the Bible definition. Listen to this simple definition in 1 John 3:4, "sin is the transgression of the law." There it is.

Now this sin, the unpardonable sin, must have something to do then with the breaking of God's law. Paul goes on to clarify that the law involved is the ten

commandment law. So the unpardonable sin has to do with the breaking of that ten commandment law of heaven. We also know that it has to do with offending the Holy Spirit.

What is the work of the Holy Spirit anyway? John 14:26 tells us that the Spirit of God will “teach you all things.” John 16:13 says, “He will guide you into all truth.” John 16:7, 8 says that He will reprove s (or convince us) of sin. So here we have the three main offices of the Holy Spirit. He will teach us, guide us, and convict us of sin. As long as the Holy Spirit is permitted to do these things for an individual, he can never be guilty of committing the unpardonable sin. But now just suppose that I refuse to be taught and guided by the Spirit. Suppose I refuse to be reprovved of breaking God’s law. In that case, the Holy Spirit will never be able to perform His work in my life.

In Genesis 6:3, God said, “My spirit shall not always strive with man.” Now I want you to take particular note of what the people were doing when God said this. They were lying, stealing and committing every other sin known to man. As Noah preached to them, the Spirit of God was present to convict them of their sins. But those people rejected the message of Noah. They refused to listen to the voice of God which pleaded with them while he was preaching. Now let me ask you something. Is this same condition prevailing in the world today? According to Ephesians 4:30 we find exactly the same rejection of the Holy Spirit taking place today.

Paul says. “And grieve not the holy spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” So people are refusing God’s message. They’re spurning the still small voice of the Holy Spirit. You may not think that this is such a terrible sin but remember that the Holy Spirit is the only connecting link between us and God. If that lifeline is ever broken, we are completely separated from heaven. David realized this when he prayed in Psalm 51:11, “Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.” Just as a drowning man can refuse to take the rope that is thrown to him, so we can refuse the Holy Spirit if we want to. But, my friends, we cut ourselves off completely from God and from salvation if we do.

Now let’s consider how a man commits this terrible sin. I’ve put down three ways in which it might be done. First of all, if we refuse to confess and forsake our sins, we will surely offend the Spirit. Proverbs 28:13 says, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them

shall have mercy.” Now that means that if we’re openly hostile to Christ and His word, we finally get set into a mold and soon we won’t even care about religion. Our heart becomes hard and determined and we resist every tender impulse of God. The second way in which we can commit this sin is to persistently put off the warning of God’s Spirit. We may have good intentions about the future but, nevertheless, we neglect the opportunity that comes to us today, and by doing that we become guilty before God. This class is represented by Felix in the Bible who was deeply convicted about his own sin, but you remember he said to Paul, “Some more convenient season, you come and speak to me again.”

Most people don’t realize that when they *neglect* the truth as Felix did, they’re actually *rejecting* it, because they seldom ever do anything about it in the future.

The third and most important way in which we can offend against the Holy Spirit is by sinning against light. Now I want us to spend some time considering this subtle snare because, friends, a greater number of people commit this sin through the rejection of new truth than in any other way. I’m convinced of that. We must never forget that truth is progressive. At not one time has all the truth ever been revealed to any one person.

We’re led on one step at a time in comprehending the will of God. As we accept the light that comes to us today, God will allow greater light to come leading us further into the truth. Psalm 119:105 says, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” As these new rays of light are shed on us, the Holy Spirit pleads with us to accept them and to walk in all the truth. If we refuse to lay hold of all the light, we will be left behind finally in the dark. The longer we resist the voice that speaks to us, the easier it becomes to reject more light.

I remember, as a boy on my father’s farm back in North Carolina, we used to go to the stables very early in the morning to help take care of the cows. Of course, it would be very dark and I would stay close to my father as he carried that lantern along the path. I could imagine all kinds of dark forms and shapes in the shadows beside that path. I didn’t dare let him get more than a step ahead of me because that lantern just flickered along showing one step at a time. In the same way, we’re to follow the light of truth as it goes before us

revealing the way. If we should ever stop while the Holy Spirit is pleading with us to go on, we find ourselves left alone in the dark.

Oh how easy it is for us to become accustomed to the voice of the Spirit until we are actually hardened to it warning. We might have an alarm clock to wake us up in the morning in time to get to work. But suppose we ignore that alarm for a few days and simply lie there until it runs down. Within a very short time, we'll be so hardened to that sound that we won't even wake up when it goes off. I was brought up on a farm, as I mentioned a moment ago, and then I went away to college for four years.

When I came back to the farm to visit my dad, I decided to go out and help him do some of the fall plowing. I took the horse and cultivators and spent about an hour in the fields. By that time my tender hands were covered with blisters from holding onto the handle of that plow. During the next few days I spent more and more time following that old horse through the fields, until finally after a few days, my hands become so tough to the plow that I didn't even notice that they were sensitive at all. Thus it is that our hearts are very sensitive to God's Spirit when He speaks to us about sin, but gradually we become insensitive by refusing to heed that voice which speaks. This way we fall into the condition which we call the unpardonable sin.

I don't believe that we can designate any one certain sin as the unpardonable sin, but it is actually a state into which we fall *as a result of resisting God's Spirit*. In 1 Timothy 4:2 this unflinching condition is illustrated in a very graphic way. It speaks about a seared conscience. "Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron." Many have tried to excuse themselves for breaking God's commandments on this very point of feeling. After resisting the truth for some time, they begin to feel that stealing, Sabbath-breaking or breaking any of the other commandments is not really very important after all.

Here's another good question, who is most liable to commit the unpardonable sin? Well, it's not the vile sinner or the abandoned reprobate who is the most susceptible to this transgression. Never forget it my friends, it's the church member who stands in the greatest danger of resisting the Holy Spirit. We sometimes have the idea that God has revealed all the truth to us already. We're very apprehensive of new light which may come through any other agency. We argue that the creed has already been drawn up for our religion

and therefore we have no interest in knowing anything more. But read John 8:31, “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed.” Now this means that we are not simply to hear the word of truth and believe it, but we’re to practice it and continue to practice it in order to please God. How easy it is to convince people about the truth. How many times people say, “Yes, I believe that you are right,” but then they don’t step out to obey the truth. If we don’t continue in God’s Word by actually living the truth and obeying the commandments of God, we’re not meeting the test of the Bible at all.

A clear picture is given in 1 John 5:3 of the test as it applies to every individual. “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” How do you stand in relation to this great test, friends? Are you striving to live according to the light of truth that God has revealed to you? Or is it possible that you’re actually resisting the Spirit which has spoken to you about the things you ought to be doing and about how you should obey the commandments of God?

Don’t ever make the mistake of thinking that you can do the will of God whenever you want to. You can’t do it. You must do the will of God when the Spirit speaks. There’s a time when that Spirit will not speak and you can’t do the will of God. Therefore today is the accepted time. Now is the moment for you to step out to obey all the light and truth that has come into your life.

The solution to the unpardonable sin is the new birth. When we are born of God and love Him supremely, we will be delighted every day to obey Him.