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The Unpardonable Sin

Billy Graham, who is one of the greatest evangelists the world has ever known, made this statement: "First, the work of the Holy Spirit is to convict us of our sin. *"And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment"* (John 16:8). He uses a mother's prayers, a tragic experience, a pastor's sermon, or some other experience to convict us of sin and of our need to run our lives over to Jesus Christ. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. He points to us and says, "You are a sinner. You need to repent." We don't like to hear that, but that is the work of the Holy Spirit. Without that work we could never have our sins forgiven, we could never be saved, we could never go to Heaven."

This is a very rich statement because it explains the very first message that the Holy Spirit has in this world: to convict the lost, and to bring them to God through His Son Jesus. In fact, the only message that the Holy Spirit has to the unsaved is that you must be Born Again. The role of the Holy Spirit on the earth is plentiful. As God, He is also full of love and compassion for everyone and that is why it has been confusing to read a scripture like Mark 3:28-30, *"Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation because they said, 'He has an unclean spirit.'"* Over the years I've had many people come to me, worried that they were going to hell over this statement. I've seen too many people live in guilt over silly things because of misunderstanding of scripture.

Depending on who you are talking to about these words spoken by Jesus, you can find many different answers to what it means. I've heard people say that everything from cursing, to rejection of speaking in tongues, as reasons that someone has blasphemed the Holy Spirit. This verse is even used by many religious preachers to control people, where there has been countless opinions and false doctrines birthed. I heard one preacher say that, even if I had lived really good for God, but failed to ask forgiveness for a bad thought I'd had before dying, I'd go to hell.

Once I learned about the nature of being born again, and I began to discover God as my Father, I also began to look at verses like this more objectively. Knowing God as my Father has set free from a relationship with God that was based on fear, and has opened the door for something beautiful. For many years I walked around afraid that I might commit a sin that day that was too much for God to forgive. I would pray for him to return on a Sunday because there was a better chance that I would be in church on that day, having a good day. On the other days, I wasn't sure if I was holy enough to qualify for heaven. Many Christians feel this way to some extent or another, and it builds a shallow relationship with God that is constantly in jeopardy and built upon your ability to be holy, and on your own righteousness. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit love us and desire a family where there is security and love as we grow and mature; a relationship that is based on the righteousness of Christ. There is a walk with God as a Father that is deep, pure and beautiful that is based on who you are, and not what you do.

So let's look at this scripture that has brought so much confusion; Jesus' discussion of blaspheming the Holy Spirit is mentioned in three of the Gospels. All three are showing the exact same moment in time but from three different people. In Matthew's account, it explains the circumstances in which Jesus speaks those words. Watch what happens in Matthew 12:22-23, *"Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. And all the multitudes were amazed and said, 'Could this be the Son of David?'"*

I want us to see what has just happened. A blind and mute man was healed and set free by Jesus. The large crowd of people had been following Jesus watching Him heal many people. The Pharisees were beside themselves, because the people were now following Jesus instead of them, and now were actually plotting to destroy Him. Jesus' purpose was to lead the Jewish people out of the Old Covenant with God and into the New Covenant, through Himself. The Pharisees were trying to stop this, and to keep the people under what they believed was God's will.

When the people asked, “**Could this be the Son of David**”, they were actually asking is this the Messiah, the promised one from God. *“Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, ‘This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.’ But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: ‘Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?’”* (Matthew 12:24-26).

The Pharisees stood up and declared to the mass crowd that the miracles they had witnessed had been done by the power of the devil and not by God. More specifically, they were also challenging the notion that Jesus was the “Son of David”. And this is why Jesus’ response was so strong against them. *“Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God. **And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven.**”* (Luke 12:8-12).

Can you imagine the throngs of people sitting, listening to Jesus, telling them that unless they become born again they will not see the kingdom of Heaven? Then the religious leaders tell that same crowd that it was not true, and it was a lie. Jesus was not trying to protect the reputation of Himself, or of the Holy Spirit, but was standing up for the message the Holy Spirit was to bring. There was not one person in the world born again and the Pharisees had just removed the only path to salvation. The message of the Holy Spirit to the world, is to come to God through Jesus, and Him alone. Jesus was not afraid of the Pharisees, or their opinions, but the crowds of people were. They had just been told to stop looking at Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus told them that you can say anything against me, and it is forgivable, but if you come against the Holy Spirit, then there is no forgiveness available for you. It was not that God would refuse to forgive a sin but you would not be able to find forgiveness. If the people were to believe the word of the Pharisees, then they would no longer look to Jesus as the Messiah. Therefore, they would lose their ability to be Born Again.

Blaspheming the Holy Spirit has nothing to do with sin or with offending God, but everything to do with the message of salvation. If the Pharisees were successful at blaspheming the Holy Spirit, and removing His message, then it would be impossible to find forgiveness. There is no forgiveness outside of Jesus Christ as your Savior. This is simply what Jesus was addressing. So, don't worry so much, and enjoy being a part of the family of love, with God as your Father.

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