



Damned If You Do?

And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons."

So Jesus called them and spoke to them in parables: "...all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin."

He said this because they were saying, "He has an evil spirit."

Mark 3:22-30

"I think I might have committed the unpardonable sin!"

The young man's voice on the other end of the phone was frantic. I tried to rub the sleep out of my eyes and sat up in bed.

"Why do you say that?" I asked.

"I did it again," he moaned. "And after I had repented so deeply. I think I'm lost. I feel horrible dread."

It wasn't the first time we'd had this conversation. This man's persistent struggle with sin had led him to believe that he was under God's curse. If his repentance had truly been sincere, he reasoned, then he would never repeat the sin. Therefore, his repentance must not have been sincere, and he must not be capable of true repentance.

Another man approached me after church one day.

"I don't know what to do. I think I've committed the unpardonable sin."

"What did you do?"

He looked at the ground. "I cursed the Holy Spirit."

"How did you do that?" I asked.

"I don't know. I was reading the verse where Jesus said that anyone who blasphemed the Holy Spirit would never be forgiven, and I just felt this crazy compulsion to do it. Now I'm scared to death."

I have heard many strange explanations of the unpardonable sin over the years and spoken to many people who fear that they might have committed it. But let us understand

something—for those who trust in Jesus, no sin is unpardonable.

When Jesus said, "Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin," he was describing a specific attitude and state of mind that can never be true of those who trust in him.

Mark explains, "He said this because they were saying, 'He has an evil spirit.'" The teachers of the law had deliberately refused to acknowledge that the works of kindness and mercy that Jesus was displaying among the people were from God. Because of their own jealousy, they had rejected the witness of the Holy Spirit that Jesus was sent from God and was doing the works of God. They willingly blinded their eyes to God's own testimony through the Spirit that Jesus had come in his name to bind Satan, destroy his evil works and forgive sins.

God sent the Spirit into the world to bear witness to Jesus Christ, the only name under heaven by which humans can be forgiven and saved. To reject that witness, to despise what God has done to bring about forgiveness of sins, is to reject the forgiveness itself. How can a person be forgiven who refuses to accept forgiveness? How can a person's sins be forgiven if the person rejects the Forgiver of sins?

Are you worried that you might have committed the unpardonable sin? The very fact that you are worried about it is proof that you have not committed it. The unpardonable sin is unpardonable only because it is the sin of refusing to come to Jesus to be forgiven. It is the Holy Spirit who leads us to Jesus Christ. The blasphemy Jesus refers to in his passage is the rejection of the Spirit's witness to him as the Son of God and Savior of the world.

Remember this: Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. For those who come to him, no sin is unpardonable.

What sin are you afraid God might not forgive you for? Have you talked to him about it? □

—J. Michael Feazell

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