THE BLASPHEMY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

*“Therefore, I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men,****but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.****Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him;* ***but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him,*** *either in this age or in the age to come”* (Mt.12:31-32). A lot of Christians struggle with this text; some worry that they have committed “the unpardonable sin.” And, while there is no doubt that unpardoned sin is a serious matter, I am persuaded that if you are ***worried*** about having committed the unpardonable sin, then you probably have NOT committed it! I say this because a careful study reveals that this sin consists of an “I don’t care attitude” toward God. Let’s see if I can explain…

I will begin our study by defining some key terms. The word, ***“blasphemy,”*** literally means “to speak against.” You can see this illustrated in our text, where “blasphemy” (v.31) is defined as “speaks against” (v.32). The phrase, ***“Son of Man,”*** refers to Jesus Christ – with stress placed upon His humanity. The ***“Holy Spirit”*** is the third person of the Godhead (cf. Ac.5:3-4). And the word, ***“age,”*** refers to a period of time – in this context, the Mosaic age (“this age”), and the Christian age (“the age to come”).

Now, let’s see if we can identify the specific sin to which Jesus refers. In the context, Christ had “cast out demons by the Spirit of God” (Mt.12:22-23,28). But the Pharisees said that Jesus did this by “Beelzebub” (i.e., Satan, v.24-27). ***Hence, the specific sin was in saying that Jesus had a demon*** (cp. Mk.3:28-30). Keep in mind that this was a flat-out denial of OBVIOUS Divine power (Mt.12:13,15,22, cf. v.38). Simply put, they could clearly see the Holy Spirit’s hand in these miracles; ***but rather than accept what they saw, they shamelessly attributed that power to Satan!***

Now, let’s explore why this sin is unforgiveable. First, it’s NOT because the Holy Spirit is “greater” than Jesus (1Jn.5:7). Second, it’s NOT because one sin brings a “greater punishment” than another (Rm.6:23; Jm.2:10). Instead, it was because the Pharisees had said that the Holy Spirit’s power was Satanic. ***Such blasphemous words came from truly evil hearts that brazenly rejected the obvious power of the Holy Spirit.*** It is no accident that, right on the heels of this event, Jesus said, “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. Brood of vipers! ***How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.*** A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” (Mt.12:33-37). In commenting on this, W.E. Vine said, “that anyone, with evidence of the Lord's power before his eyes, should declare it to be Satanic, ***exhibited a condition of heart beyond Divine illumination and therefore hopeless...*** As to the Son of Man, in his state of humiliation, there might be misunderstanding, but not so with the Holy Spirit's power demonstrated.*"*(Vine's Expository Dictionary, p.134)

These facts lead me to conclude that we are ***incapable*** of blaspheming the Holy Spirit ***in the same sense*** that the Pharisees did. While people today might deny Jesus’ miracles, or attribute them to Satan, the denial is not quite the same. Today, people are only denying what the text says; ***but back in Jesus’ day, they blasphemed the source of the power that they saw with their very own eyes!*** That being said, there is a more fundamental issue here: the denial of revealed truth. THAT is a sin that can be (and is) committed even today (Hb.3:12-13). Our conscience can become “seared” (1Tm.4:1-2), resulting in a rejection of truth, which leads to ***unforgiven*** sin (but not ***unforgiveable*** sin).

The bottom line is that "the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit" betrayed ***an attitude of heart which was willing to reject obvious or clearly-established truth.*** And the reason such sin will not be forgiven is because forgiveness is impossible as long as one rejects truth (Hb.6:4-6). To avoid this sin, we must NEVER reject the truth of God!

--Lanny Smith