

## ***Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit***

***"And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come." (Matthew 12:31-32)***

Blasphemy is extreme slander and is the same as speaking against God. Jesus' comment is remarkable since the forgiveness of God is so broad we normally think that nothing is beyond its reach. Yet there is an act that will never be forgiven.

In order to understand what Jesus meant by the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, the context in which He spoke is important. Jesus had just exercised a demon from a deaf mute. With the demon gone the man could hear and speak freely. Both the healing and casting out of the demon were undeniable displays of the power of God at work in Christ. To deny them would be to thoughtfully, willfully, and self-consciously reject the work of God even though there was no other explanation for it. This is what the Pharisees did, and the imperfect tense of "say" suggests that they had not just said this once, but continually. Attributing this unquestionable work of God to Satan was logically absurd and in reality was simply a weak attempt to purposely and willfully remain in a state of unbelief.

Therefore, the distinction between the blasphemy of the Son of Man and the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit seems to be that the former is the rejection of Jesus, while the latter is rejecting Him in full awareness that that is exactly what one is doing. "For such a sin there is no forgiveness, 'either in this age or the age to come' (Matt. 13:22; 25:46) - a dramatic way of saying 'never' (as in Mk. 3:29)" (Carson, 291-292)

If this interpretation is correct, the distinction between blasphemy against the Son of Man and that of the Holy Spirit is only incidental, for rejection of

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the Son of Man with ample understanding of who He is, is also rejecting the Holy Spirit who reveals Him.

Once someone has rejected God even after indisputable evidence has been presented, there is nothing more that can be done to convince them to believe. For such people forgiveness is impossible.

Hoekema lists five clarifications of this sin:

1. This is not the same as doubt - it is a deliberate rejection of God's revelation in Christ.
2. This presupposes a revelation of the grace of God, a working of the Holy Spirit and some illumination of the mind about the truths of salvation.
3. Calvin describes it as "striving knowingly to extinguish the Spirit dwelling in us."
4. The sinner has reached a point of no return where no matter what more is given it will not cause him to repent.
5. The one who fears that he has committed this sin probably hasn't, since fear is incompatible with the state of mind of the one who has sinned in this way.

(Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 185-186)