

THE UNFORGIVABLE SIN

The foundation of New Covenant between God and humanity — and the conclusion of the Old Covenant — is the Cross: the shedding of the blood of Christ and His Resurrection.

Its import is so encompassing and complete that the Apostle Paul, in his teaching to the church at Corinth, could write that nothing else mattered:

1 Corinthians 2:2 *For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. [NRSV]*

The Cross is the sacrifice, which gives Christ the power to atone for all sins: no matter how great and to impart righteousness to sinners by means of His obedience to the Father:

Romans 5:18–19 *Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. ¹⁹For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. [NRSV]*

Finally, His forgiveness is sealed permanently, as sinners are made into new creatures with no trace of the old, which is passed away.

2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. [NASB]*

Furthermore, the love of God for the world is so great that He will wait patiently so that all may have an opportunity to repent, receive His forgiveness and the eternal life promised.

2 Peter 3:9 *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. [KJV]*

Some may deem that certain sins are so great or their wanton cruelty so heinous that surely to forgive them would be an injustice: a righteous God won't forgive them. However, that is human — "carnal" — justice. The love of God is measured by the sacrifice of His own Son, which is so immense as to overcome all sins.

For example, what can be more heinously evil than the murder of Jesus, the one human being Who, throughout His whole life was without sin, not having committed any transgression and Who, on the contrary, did nothing but good?

Yet for His killers, Jesus famously asked, on account of their spiritual ignorance:

Luke 23:34 *Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing." [NLT]*

The infinite power of the Cross is thus summarized by Jesus:

Matthew 12:31a *"Therefore I tell you, people will be forgiven for every sin and blasphemy," [NRSV]*

However, we must remember that Jesus continued His utterance by saying:

Matthew 12:31b–32 *"but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³²Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come." [NRSV]*

This one action will not be forgiven: neither now nor ever.

One may wonder what such a sin might be that is beyond the love of God, beyond the reach of the Redeemer and, perhaps, one may ask what such cruelty might be that it exceeds the murder of Christ.

It helps our understanding of the unforgiveable sin, if we consider the function of the Holy Spirit: what the Holy Spirit does.

It was explained by Jesus, when He announced His own departure from earth:

John 16:7–9 *"But in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don't, the Advocate won't come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you. ⁸And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment. ⁹The world's sin is that it refuses to believe in me." [NLT]*

The Holy Spirit is the One, Who has both the ability and the function to make me understand my sinful condition before God, to open my spiritual eyes and my heart to the reality of the One and only True God, Who created the world and Who loves immensely the world and me. In the words of the Apostle Paul:

1 Corinthians 12:3 *Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Let Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit. [NRSV]*

It is the Holy Spirit — and only the Holy Spirit — Who can give me the belief and the knowledge of Who Jesus is: the Lord.

It is the Holy Spirit, Who leads me to repentance and to the realization that the only way out of damnation and on to salvation is forgiveness of my sins by Christ's Atonement, as explained by the Apostle Peter to the high priest and his family.

Acts 4:8a, 10, 12 *Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ¹⁰let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. ¹²Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."* [NKJV]

Hence, speaking against the Holy Spirit, blaspheming Him and resisting His work, is a rejection of the entreaty God makes to me.

Revelation 3:20 *"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and eat with you, and you will eat with me."* [EXB]

The voice of Jesus is the Holy Spirit; Jesus is ready to come to me; but it is not automatic. I must heed the call and not reject it: it is I, who must open the door.

In the New Covenant, forgiveness of sin is indeed the unearned and unearnable free gift of God; it is an incredible manifestation of how God is able to exercise His love and forgive me all my sins, without impairing His eternal standard of justice, by having Jesus bear the punishment deserved by me.

Ephesians 2:8 *For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift* [HCSB]

Indeed in the New Covenant forgiveness is free, but the New Covenant is not a free-for-all.

Rather it is a Covenant where both parties — although not equal — do recognize each other: I, a sinner, acknowledge the Redeemer and repent; God accepts me and reconciles me to Himself.

If I reject the path God is freely opening for me, as revealed by His Holy Spirit, Who calls me to repentance, and if thus I do not acknowledge and believe in the Redeemer, there is no Covenant: one party is missing — I am missing — and there is no forgiveness; rather there is condemnation.

John 3:17–18 *"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. ¹⁸He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."* [NKJV]

Jesus is able to give forgiveness generously to all who come to Him, but those who oppose the Holy Spirit, who oppose the conviction of the truth of God's Son, are not covered by the blood shed and will be found on the wide road described by Jesus at the end of the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 7:13–14 *"Enter through the narrow gate. The gate is wide and the road is wide that leads to hell, and many people enter through that gate. ¹⁴But the gate is small and the road is narrow that leads to true life. Only a few people find that road."* [EXB]

One road is wide, one road is narrow: few find the latter and are forgiven; many will perish.

As taught by the Apostle Peter, the will of God is that no one perish and He exercises divine patience for His will to be done. However, patience is for a time and it is not ultimate forgiveness of sin.

The prophet Isaiah concisely described how the opposition to the Spirit of God by the children of Israel, after He extended His love to them, resulted in God becoming their enemy:

Isaiah 63:9–10 *In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. ¹⁰Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit. So he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them.* [NIV]

It is my communication with God that is lost when, instead of communing with the Holy Spirit, I reject or grieve Him and thus refuse His forgiveness, now and ever.

Rather, let us rejoice in the communion with the Holy Spirit, as in the last salute of the Apostle Paul to the church at Corinth and to all of us:

2 Corinthians 13:14 *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.* [KJV]